



# 오크지만 찬양해

이정민  
판타지 장편소설

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몬스터

# **Praise the Orc!**

**– 오크지만 찬양해! –**

**- Volume 1 -**

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## – SYNOPSIS –

### Synopsis:

The virtual reality game that enthralled the entire world, Elder Lord!  
In the midst of avarice, the justice of a single orc begins!

### Editor's Synopsis:

Praise the Orc! is about Jung Ian, a cafe owner with a dark past, jumping into the world of virtual reality in order to protect his sister from any predators. However, things may not be as simple as he first believed them to be. Witness as he explores the lands of Elder Lord as an orc, a species labeled as the “game creator’s mistake”, defeating any and all before him!

# GLOSSARY OF COMMON KOREAN TERMS

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This is a page containing a list of common Korean honorifics and terms that might show up, so I won't have to give an explanation for them.

- Hyung: used by males to refer to an older male. It can be their actual older brother or someone they are close to.
- Hyungnim: more respectful way of saying Hyung.
- Oppa: used by females to refer to an older male.
- Unni: used by females to refer to an older female.
- Noona: used by males to refer to an older female.
- Noonim: more respectful way of saying Noona.
- Ahjussi: a term used for middle-aged men.
- Ajumma: a term used for middle-aged women.
- Orabeoni: more respectful way for females to refer to older males. More commonly used in the older days.
- Abamama: term used by princes and princesses to refer to their father, the king. More commonly used in the older days.
- Omamama: term used by princes and princesses to refer to their mother, the queen. More commonly used in the older days.
- nim: a title of respect. It is usually attached after an occupation.
- ssi: a title of respect. It is usually attached after actual names.
- Sunbae: used to refer to someone older than you who usually goes to the same school or works in the same place as you.
- Hoobae: used to refer to someone younger than you who usually goes to the same school or works in the same place as you.
- Chaebol: Type of family run business conglomerate. Members of that family are often called chaebols.

# CHAPTER 1

## PROLOGUE

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The big screen that was installed on the building shone. Those who were walking on the street or driving couldn't keep their eyes from the screen.

There was an orc on the screen. A single orc. He was facing thousands of troops alone.

*-He showed up again.*

*-He is blocking the allied forces alone.*

*-Nobody knows who he is.*

*-It is unknown if he is a user, an NPC, or a named boss NPC that the game manufacturers have created.*

*-Everything is unknown.*

The commander who led the army approached the orc. The screen zoomed in on the commander's handsome face as he said,

"Do you think you can stop it alone?"

The orc didn't answer, the steel helmet casting a shadow over his expressionless face.

"Why are you blocking us?"

The narrator explained who the man was.

*-An elf, he has the War Maestro class, lauded as a hidden piece, and is the top ranking master of the Heaven and Earth Clan. He is a genius at large-scale tactical command.*

*-He is Choi Hansung, a popular user called 'Rommel.'*

The orc then opened his mouth.

"Why are you attacking them?"

The orc spoke in a distinctively thick and low voice.

“That...”

Choi Hansung hesitated to speak. The answer was obvious. Due to the ‘large-scale quest’, he wanted to receive ‘items’ and to gain ‘levels’. He would then obtain ‘wealth’ and ‘power’. However, he couldn’t give that answer.

“They are our enemies.”

“Why?”

“If you block us any further, then you will also become our enemy.”

“Didn’t you come to this place to betray their faith, and slaughter the innocents, just to gain money and equipment?”

The orc laughed,

“Human who does not know honor.”

“I am an elf. Are you perhaps a user?”

“Listen carefully.”

The orc raised his gaze. Inside his helmet, a formidable light shone. His appearance on the screen was zoomed in, making him seem like he was looking at everyone.

The orc declared loudly. His voice rang throughout the plains and out of the screen, into the ears of everyone listening.

“I am an orc, a warrior.”

“A warrior doesn’t forsake faith.”

“A warrior doesn’t persecute the weak.”

“A warrior doesn’t attack unarmed people.”

“A warrior doesn’t yield to injustice.”

“A warrior doesn’t shame the gods.”

“A warrior pays back any favors or vengeance.”

“A warrior protects the powerless.”

“I swear to the gods, I will abide by these laws as a warrior.”

The orc lifted his enormous greatsword.

“Prove your honor.”

The body of the orc appeared on the screen.

The earth shook and the entire army, including the commander, took one step back.

The orc laughed, “Come, Human.”

## CHAPTER 2

### MAKER'S MISTAKE (1)

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"Game, start!"

At the compulsion, Ian stiffened and shook his head. He was a man who had never succumbed to oppression. He slowly pressed his hand against his younger sister's forehead in warning as she tried to forcefully push her upper body over the counter.

"If you don't have any credits, then you are banned from accessing it."

However, his sister Jung Yiyu didn't back down.

"Just try connecting as a test. Oppa is always doing everything, which is why you don't have a girlfriend."

"Cash or credit?"

"Ah, why do you want to receive money from your little sister!"

"There are other customers waiting behind you, so please hurry."

"Wah. Really."

Yiyu's face turned red as she heard the laughter behind her. She extended some bills clutched in her fist.

"You are lacking 500 won..."

"Shut up. I'm going to school!"

Yiyu stuck her tongue out and ran away from the cafe. Ian smiled as he looked at her back.

The customer waiting for their turn came up.

"Ian-ssi's little sister is always cheerful."



“I wish she was calmer. Did you want an Americano?”

As the man who ran a quiet cafe, Jung Ian always had a kind smile. His tall, slender body and gentle atmosphere meant that quite a few female customers stopped by to see him every day. It had been less than one year since he opened Cafe Reason, but the relaxed atmosphere meant that it was always frequented by regulars.

“Ian-ssi, are you playing Elder Lord?”

“I’m not good at games.”

“It’s a virtual reality game so you should be okay. Ian-ssi should give it a try. Don’t you think that there are more people playing the game than people not playing it?”

“Haha. Is that so? Here is your Iced Americano.”

“Please let me know if you ever start. I’ll help you, as my level is quite high.”

Elder Lord was a virtual reality game that started its service a few months ago.

It already dominated the virtual reality game market due to: the perfect reality that couldn’t be compared with existing games, the unique game system, and the fact that the rate of assimilation affected a player’s abilities.

Role-playing users who shot movies of their characters were broadcasted during the golden time, while the revenue of the rankers surpassed that of celebrities and sports stars.

The fact that virtual reality was starting to replace reality had now become a slogan. This was the age of Elder Lord.

Ian bought a connection capsule for Yiyu a while ago, but now she wanted him to join her. He could guess the reason why Yiyu was doing this.

Elder Lord was very difficult, and it was hard to level up and improve one’s abilities. Monsters and NPCs were also very strong, so most of the first-time users suffered. They were strangers who entered the world of the NPCs and started from the bottom, so soon after Yiyu started, she couldn’t help but whine to Ian to help her.

A person’s real abilities could affect their performance in Elder Lord. A player’s

physical abilities depended on the character, but players could reproduce techniques that they already knew. It was rumored that rankers were people skilled in martial arts or acrobatics.

Ian had seen a war video of Elder Lord on television, and he didn't like it very much.

"...Excuse me?"

"Ah, I'm sorry. What did you say just now?"

"Cappuccino..."

Ian's hands shook as he entered the order. He held his trembling fists and then slowly opened his hand. The shaking stopped, and it felt like his hand was frozen stiff.

At one time, he had been on the battlefield and slept with death around him every day.

He wouldn't ever play Elder Lord. After meeting the eyes of those dying on the battlefield, how could he cheer as he saw a sword slicing a man's neck in a game?



"Won't you try it once?"

Ian shook his head.

"What do you mean? I won't do it."

"This guy, why are you still caught up in the past? I saw that you were shaking when you were trying to shoot a gun."

"It isn't like that."

Ian turned his gaze away.

The man who was facing him, Baek Hanho, burst out laughing. He wore an improved hanbok, but his hair had pomade in it, and he was wearing an expensive watch. He sipped the coffee that Ian brought and muttered, "Ehh, I can't drink this."

"Coffee was originally this bitter."

“Life isn’t like that either.”

Ian frowned.

Baek Hanho spoke once again before gulping down the coffee. Baek Hanho tilted his head upwards and laughed after drinking all of it.

“You finished it.”

“Didn’t you say that coffee is originally this bitter?”

Baek Hanho laughed and stroked his chin. Then he continued, “I know that coffee is originally bitter water. That’s why I was afraid.”

“I hate it when you speak in zen riddles.”

“You are a coward.”

Ian’s face wrinkled again.

Then Baek Hanho said, “Take a look at your sister, Yiyu. Isn’t she someone who grew up alone? Now her brother won’t even play a game with her. Tsk tsk.”

“.....”

“I’m only joking, but you should seriously consider my words.”

Ian held his chin and started thinking.

Suddenly, the door opened and the notification bell was heard.

There were two people, one tugging at the other. They were both girls, the sound of their high heels heard by the entire cafe as they entered. Their words came out in an unstable tone. In all likelihood, they were the last customers of the day.

Ian automatically checked everything about them, his habits from the battlefield obviously still following him. He heard their voices.

“In regards to Elder Lord, I managed to level up due to Oppa helping me. What about you?”

“Wah... I’m envious. He changed yesterday. How irritating.”

“Changed?”

“That pig suddenly touched my butt... I have truly bad luck.”

“What did you do? Did you report it? Why would he do that? Really?”

Ian’s eyes shook as he heard the conversation. Hanho placed a cookie in his mouth. Then he said to Ian,

“Hum hum. In fact, I am quite far in Elder Lord...”

Then he paused as he saw Ian’s eyes.

“...What?”

“Teacher-nim.”

“What is it?”

“Elder Lord, how do I connect to it?”

“Have you changed your mind?”

“I have.”

Thus, Ian started the game to defend his sister.

“Right.”



Huge trees and lush foliage covered the sky. The sunshine pouring through the gaps disturbed his eyes. He stepped on soft soil. He could smell the forest, hear the cries of the birds and saw insects crawling around.

Ian was flustered.

“This... is a game?”

It couldn't be. It was a reality. However, the message windows that surfaced before him said that this was a game.

[Welcome to Elder Lord.]

[Please check your status window.]

[Your starting point is Orcrox Fortress. Good luck.]

The message windows disappeared once Ian checked them. Once again, the lush forest that seemed like reality stretched out before him. Ian idly wandered and saw a puddle. A small squirrel that was sipping water fled when it saw Ian.

Ian confirmed his appearance in the water. He was a huge monster with green skin and huge tusks protruding from his rough face.

[Status Window]

Ian, Novice Orc.

Level: 1

Achievement Points: 0

Assimilation: 50%

Abilities:

Orc's Strength (Common)

Orc's Recovery (Common)

He was an orc.

The users could select from the following list of species: the humans, elves, dark elves, dwarves, gnomes, and the orcs. Unlike the other species that had an appearance similar to humans, the orcs looked like an in-game monster. Their appearance couldn't even be customized like humans.

Therefore, Ian chose it. The reason was simple: he wanted to surprise Yiyu.

However, when he opened his hands and checked his green skin and thick fingers, he felt uncomfortable, as if his soul was occupying the body of another being. The weight and center of this body was different from reality. It seemed like time was required to become more familiar with this body.

Sometimes animals would discover Ian and run away. Ian chased after them and dived in pursuit. He managed to grab a rabbit.

This body was heavy, but fast. The density of its muscles was different from humans. This was a strong orc.

Ian looked at the spires of the castle that were rising above the trees in the distance.

'The cradle of the orc warriors, Orcrox Fortress.'

It seemed like he needed to go there. Ian walked in the direction of Orcrox Fortress and disappeared into the forest.

After Ian left this place, a new player appeared out of thin air. He also looked around like it was his first connection.

"Ohh, this is Elder Lord? Really? Doesn't it look like the real thing? This is a virtual reality game."

"Let's see... Put it in the ear... I do this..."

"Uh, I've connected. What do I do? Species? Orc. A man should be an orc... What? Do it again?"

"What? Wasn't it in the introduction of the game? Why is an orc an error? A species that the game manufacturers accidentally opened? A dog-like species? The orcs of

Elder Lord are too weak? People don't choose them as a species? There is no one? None? Really none?"

"They all reset before level 5? No... Yes, you what?"

"Are you trying to be vicious to the NPCs, like a villain who steps on the underpaid contract workers below you? It is okay since this is a game? Users are much better than NPCs? Puhahaha. I understand."

"Understood. Then, I will be a human. I'll say it again, it is a lot of effort."

## CHAPTER 3

### MAKER'S MISTAKE (2)

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As Ian approached the wall, two orcs in chain armor stood tall like stone statues. Their blades flashed in the sun.

They discovered Ian and laughed. They were laughing, but due to their tusks and their heinous appearance, their faces seemed evil.

“Hey, are you alive?”

“I’m alive. I came here to become a fellow warrior.”

They burst out laughing. It was a unique tone caused by their stomachs shaking. Ian gulped at their overwhelming momentum. He had once been a soldier, but he couldn’t help but shrink back at the two monstrous orcs side by side.

One of the orcs held out a fist.

“...?”

Ian looked at the rough hand blankly before realizing it was a greeting. Ian also made a fist and bumped it against each other. The orc guard smiled and said,

“Anyway, you have arrived at Orcrox and I wish you good luck. Today there is a funeral where we will remember an honorable warrior. Kulkul. Stay alive.”

They shouted to open the door. The walls were high enough to cover the sun, and the giant door that was the size of the building started to slowly open. The door opened with a thunderous sound and Ian was able to see the inside of Orcrox Fortress.

“Ohh...”

Ian thought of orcs as savage monsters, since their appearance alone was heinous. But that wasn’t it. The scale of the buildings were different. There were tall buildings around the giant tree in the center, with bridges in the sky connecting each one. Above his head, orcs were busy going to and fro.



It felt like the city of elves in a fantasy world! There weren't just warriors with weapons or shamans with staffs, but various orcs, such as merchants, in order to form a civilization.

It was a magnificent landscape that was more realistic than reality. The orc fortress filled Ian's view.

"This is really a game..."

"Hey, you're alive. Are you new?"

Passing orcs smiled at the stunned newcomer and held out their fists. Ian bumped them with his fists.

Whether he was alive or not, it didn't take long for him to realize that it was the orcs' greeting. All of them asked each other if they were alive, meaning this was a place where life and death occurred often enough for it to become a greeting.

Ian didn't know what to do after entering Orcrox Fortress, so he checked the interface for beginners tips.

[If you selected an orc, can you really endure it?]

[If you are a beginner, look for Instructor Lenox at Orcrox Fortress.]

"Lenox...?"

It was at that moment.

"Uh, a user? Wah, a real user?"

There was a loud and gruff voice, but the tone was light. Ian turned his head and saw a shabby looking orc.

"This is the first time I've seen another beginner orc. It's nice to meet you!"

He tried to shake hands before grunting and putting out his fist like the other orcs. Ian smiled and bumped his fist.

“Are you alive?”

“I’m alive. Haha, by the way, did you just start playing? What’s your name? I’m called Grom. I got it from a character in an old classic game.”

“Yes. I’m Ian.”

Ian nodded. Ian then discovered something on the other person’s forehead. A white star was shimmering in the middle of his forehead.

“That...?”

“What?”

Grom followed Ian’s gaze to his forehead.

“Ah, this. You don’t know? The white star allows you to identity the users. Ian has one on your forehead as well. That’s how I knew that you were a user. NPC’s can’t see it, only we can. This is really the first time I’ve seen it.”

“Is that so?”

“There are even some who hide it to pretend to be NPCs. You must have really started without investigating anything.”

“This is the first time I’m playing a game.”

“I see. Be careful, this is a big deal. Elder Lord is a really hard game so you should look at the tips.”

He nodded and smiled.

“Of course, you didn’t see it, which is why you picked an orc.”

“Huh?”

“It’s nothing. Are you going to see Lenox?”

“That is what the tip said.”

“Let’s go together. I was about to start heading there now.”

Ian followed Grom.

Ian was immersed in the sight of the city. Orcrox Fortress was filled with all types of things. There was a market and smithy. It was a realistic scene that couldn’t be thought of as a game as merchants shouted about their goods, adventurers gathered to fight monsters and orcs drank alcohol.

Ian started to think differently of Elder Lord. The game system seemed to have a personality and story for each character. A civilization and culture was created for the orcs. It was a wonderful game.

As Ian immersed himself in the world of Elder Lord, Grom laughed.

“Isn’t it amazing?”

“Yes. I can’t believe this is a game. How...”

He couldn’t believe that what he was seeing, hearing and feeling now was a game.

“Oh, there is a funeral.”

“Funeral?”

“Orcs are mourning the death of a great warrior. He was a great NPC who sacrificed himself to protect his allies.”

Suddenly, the faint sound of a horn could be heard.

At that moment. The entire Orcrox Fortress became quiet.

“Ah...?”

All the orcs were silent. Even the merchants shouting at the market and the drunkards became silent. The horn rang out slowly in the midst of this quiet. All the orcs looked at the center of Orcrox Fortress.

There appeared to be an altar made of bricks with an orc body lying on top of firewood. The orcs started humming in bold tones. It was a thick, subdued tone, like the humming of the Tibetan monks. The entire Orcrox Fortress was filled with the beat of the funeral procession.

At the bottom of the altar, the orcs presiding over the funeral started to slowly beat the drums. The sound of the horns and the drumming and humming of the orcs mixed together. The warrior's body caught on fire, the flames consuming the body of the dead orc warrior. The orcs held a ceremony in remembrance of their own.

"Ah..."

Ian was shocked.

A ceremony to honor their comrades.

He was reminded of a soldier on the battlefield. Cornell had become a star in the sky due to rebel bullets, and his colleagues had sent him away with bright smiles instead of sad tears. The song chosen wasn't a tranquil song, but an army song. Nobody cried that day, but their hearts and minds were overflowing with hot and sad emotions.

The memory of that day was revived.

The humming of the orcs was grand and noble. Ian couldn't take his eyes off the burning orc warrior. The mournful cry of the horns wandered throughout Orcrox Fortress.

Ian didn't know the name of the orc, since he was just a character in the game. However, it is clear to Ian that he was a great and respected man.

"Ah, noisy."

Ian's mind snapped back at Grom's words. Grom was grumbling beside him.

"A funeral should proceed quickly and quietly. Ahyu. Right?"

Ian looked at him blankly.

Did this person really feel no emotions when seeing this scene? In a world that seemed more real than reality, could he throw away the solemn ceremony of the orcs just

because it was a game?

Ian turned his gaze once again to the burning body of the orc warrior.

[Assimilation: 50%]

[Assimilation: 51%]

[Assimilation: 52%]

.....

Ian didn't know about the changes in his status window.



-Hello! I am a helper to help you live a comfortable Elder Lord life, Yoojung!

-I am Jaehan!

-Today we will talk about assimilation rate. Jaehan-ssi, what is your current assimilation rate?

-When my condition is good, it is over 50%. On average, it is 40%.

-That is amazing. I am usually 30%. An average user is between 30~40%, so Jaehan-ssi is capable.

-Hahaha. Still, I don't want to get hurt when fighting, so I often end up limiting it. At 50%, I feel dizzy like I am actually hit by a knife.

-In fact, I usually play at a limit of 20% due to that.

-Oh, that is worse.

-Hihihi. Anyway, what is the assimilation rate of the viewers? The survey results say

that the average is between 30~40%. In the case of high rankers, especially those who are role-playing, it may be up to 70%.

-Amazing, don't they seem to be properly immersed?

*Tremble tremble.*

-In particular, the most popular roleplayer, user Kim Dalkwang of the militia, has released his latest status window. His assimilation rate is a huge 73%.

-Whoa! Is that how he became a ranker?

-The game publishers didn't disclose how the assimilation rate affects performance, but it certainly has an effect. It is common sense that rankers have a higher rate of assimilation, since the assimilation rate determines the ranker's abilities. Their skills, attacks and movements are superior in every way. Doesn't this narrow down the difference between NPC's and users?

-Ah, scary NPCs! I don't like NPCs!

-Haha. Is that so? That is why users are attempting to create a village! I interviewed Elaine, an elf user who designed Shangri-la, the village of users...

A restaurant staff member changed the television channel.

"Eh, the world is going crazy for games..."

Jung Yiyu, who was immersed in the contents, recovered. Her friends who she was eating together with also turned their heads away.

"What is your assimilation rate?"

"I'm around 20~30%?"

"I've gone over 40% but I'm usually around 30%."

Jung Yiyu laughed, "I am 10%!"

"Hey, what is this?"

“Do you only play with the right side of your brain while the left side is sleeping?”

“It’s a game. The thought of it being a game keeps me from being immersed... Well, I did level up.”

“You died to a rabbit.”

“What? How did a rabbit kill you? Is that possible? Do rabbits even attack?”

Yiyu sighed.

“I don’t know. I tried to attack it, but the rabbit bit my legs. I was constantly bitten by the rabbit and died from severe bleeding.”

“Amazing.”

“Crazy...”

Jung Yiyu laughed.

“But don’t worry. Now my troubles are over, since my brother has started playing the game.”

“Ah, that brother?”

“Yes. Oppa will become a high ranker quickly and take care of me. I will catch up to all of you.”

A friend who was listening interrupted her, “Why will he become a high ranker?”

“My brother is a soldier.”

“Soldier?”

“Will a soldier be more familiar with something like Elder Lord?”

“There are plenty of army men.”

“He was in a real battlefield, not a normal soldier. Do you know the foreign troops? He shot people in the Middle East and Africa.”

“Really? Then he has killed people?”

Everyone’s gaze turned to Yiyu, who shrugged.

“I don’t know, he doesn’t talk about it...”

“Amazing. A friend of my brother’s is a martial arts player and adapted immediately. Isn’t he a ranker now?”

“Hey, Jung Yiyu. Don’t pretend not to know me later.”

Yiyu shrugged at her friends.

“So be good to me.”

However, Yiyu didn’t know one important thing about Ian, whom she was putting all of her expectations in.

He chose the orc that was called the game maker’s mistake.



# CHAPTER 4

## INSTRUCTOR LENOX (1)

---

“Kuheook!”

Ian fell to the ground.

The orc warrior, Instructor Lenox, laughed at them.

“You guys came to become warriors?”

“Keoooook...”

Lenox grabbed Grom’s neck.

“You! Don’t overrate yourselves! Orcs! Keep your head up!”

Lenox pushed his face right up to theirs and shouted,

“Look at these soft limbs! You aren’t orcs! Humans! Elves! I can even believe that you are dwarves!”

Lenox then threw Grom, who moaned as he rolled across the floor. The orc warriors that were training laughed at them with their distinct voices.

When Ian and Grom first told Lenox that they wanted to be orc warriors, Lenox asked them,

“Why do you want to be a warrior?”

Ian and Grom looked at each other. Grom replied within a minute,

“I want to become stronger!”

The Orcs, a fighting species. They were strong warriors who worshiped fighters and never bowed to the enemy! It was a textbook answer, and to some extent, it was true.

Lenox’s eyes widened at Grom’s response. He nodded, and then punched Grom and

Ian. Now they were being beaten up.

“Why, why are you doing this...?”

Even if it was virtual reality, they still felt pain. The amount of sensation was deducted in accordance with one's assimilation rate, but the pain itself still existed. Grom sounded like he was going to cry from the beating. Lenox and the other orc warriors once again laughed at Grom's voice.

“The sissy is crying now! That's it, meek orc!”

Lenox raised his fist once again and Grom crouched down. Lenox smiled and put down his fist.

Then he turned and looked at Ian. Ian was bracing himself while standing up. He shook due to the sense of pain that he had forgotten for a while. It really felt like he was being beaten. He started swaying.

“Hey you! What about you?”

“Huh?”

“Did you come here because you wanted to become stronger like him?”

Ian felt a sense of déjà vu.

Lenox resembled the instructor of the foreign troops. The instructor had asked the recruits, ‘Why did you come here? What reason do you have for jumping into the firing line?’ There were many answers, but the instructor just laughed and kicked them.

Then Ian replied,

“To protect my younger sister.”

Their parents had died, leaving no money and inherited debt. He had to protect his little sister. He, who only had a body that learned martial arts. He turned towards the battlefield.

The instructor had nodded at Ian's reply and kicked Ian in the stomach.

“Do it well.”

The instructor had muttered softly instead of laughing.

As Ian recalled that time, he stared into Lenox’s eyes. Lenox no longer seemed like an ugly monster in a game. He was a warrior, an instructor. A mentor to the orc warriors. It wasn’t the time to joke right now.

He stared straight into his eyes. Lenox wasn’t the type who required a typical answer in a game.

“That’s right.”

“Hoh.”

“Become stronger...”

Ian said firmly.

“To protect my precious people.”

He was sincere, Ian had truly started this game for Yiyu. He had learned on the battlefield that the world was a heavy place. The wars were just a proxy for the politicians.

Lenox laughed at Ian’s answer and then he slammed his fist into Ian’s abdomen.

“Heeok!”

Ian clenched his teeth and persisted. His waist folded, but his legs didn’t collapse.

“Everybody get up.”

Lenox’s voice was heard and Grom stood up. The two people stood in front of Lenox. Lenox looked at Grom first.

“If you want to become stronger, never cower.”

“Yes, yes!”

“Straighten your waist.”

Grom tightened his waist. Then Lenox looked at Ian.

“You want to protect your precious people?”

“That’s right.”

“Right now, you can’t even protect yourself, let alone your precious people.”

Lenox grinned.

“Remember today’s helplessness.”

[You have become an orc apprentice warrior!]

[Become a great orc warrior with the teachings of Instructor Lenox!]

[10 achievement points have been acquired!]

The message windows opened. Grom looked like he had received the same messages.

Lenox made a gesture to follow him. They entered a large stone building that was beside the training grounds.

“Anyone who wants to become a warrior will need to stop by here.”

He waved his hands and the dark interior lit up.

“These are the great warriors who have entered the Hall of Fame.”

The lit torches revealed multiple statues surrounding them. They were several times larger than actual orcs and were delicately sculpted to look as if they were alive. Ian once again admired the level of civilization of the orcs.

The statues stood proudly with their weapons, including an axe, a hammer, a mace,

and a morning star. Lenox asked,

“Who do you want to follow?”

The message windows popped up.

[Please select your role model!]

[The orcs believe in intuition and following the pull of the soul.]

[Your weapon will depend on this choice.]

[The weapon can be changed at a later time, but for the time being, you will proceed with the weapon and skills that you have chosen.]

It seemed like they were now choosing their weapons. Ian methodically examined the statues. The statues looked down at the center of the circle, making him feel like he was making eye contact with those legendary figures.

Ian suddenly felt an intense gaze and turned his head. One of the statues that was holding a huge greatsword was staring at Ian. Even though it was a stone statue, Ian’s heart pounded as it seemed as if the eyes were actually looking at him. But that wasn’t the only thing that surprised Ian.

He was a human.

“That human...?”

Lenox replied,

“Leyteno.”

Lenox walked towards the statue of Leyteno.

“He walked the path of a warrior like us and was the only human to become a brother of the orcs.”

“This human?”

“A long time ago, when the humans betrayed us and broke the covenant, Leyteno fought with us against their greed and hypocrisy. He was a warrior who knew honor, a true warrior who never compromised when faced with injustice and never abandoned faith. Every time he wielded his greatsword, the blood of the enemies would gush out like a river.”

Lenox extended this fist. The statue of Leyteno stayed still, but it seemed like he met Lenox’s fist.

“We respectfully call him the master of the greatsword.”

[You have chosen a great warrior, the master of the greatsword, who became the brother of the orcs in human form, Leyteno!]

[Your weapon is a greatsword.]

[Skill Greatsword Technique (Common) has been acquired.]

[Status Window:]

Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior.

Level: 1

Achievement Points: 10

Assimilation: 53%

Abilities:

Orc’s Strength (Common)

Orc’s Recovery (Common)

## Greatsword (Common)

His weapon was automatically designated by the system, but Ian didn't panic, as he had wanted to choose Leyteno. He was a human, but he chose an orc as his character. He felt a sense of connection to Leyteno, who had become a brother of the orcs in human form. In addition, Ian had learned the sword from Baek Hanho.

[Due to your basic skills, the proficiency of Greatsword Technique (Common) has increased. As proficiency accumulates, you can upgrade it to the Uncommon rating.]

How did his game know that he had previously learned swordsmanship? The system was truly elaborate.

"Grom has chosen Gloin, whose axe is said to have split apart a whole mountain."

"The axe is good."

"That's right. The axe is a basic weapon for all orc warriors. Kulkulkul."

Lenox laughed. He also carried an axe on his back.

"Follow me."

After they left the Hall of Fame, Lenox pulled out their weapons from the arsenal next to the training grounds.

[The Old Greatsword (Common) has been acquired.]

It was difficult to hold the heavy greatsword.

Unlike other games, Elder Lord didn't have an inventory. It was a game that eliminated user convenience for extreme realism. Even considering the size of the orcs, he would have to carry an oversized greatsword from now on.

Grom also wobbled as he held his axe. Grom whispered,

"We aren't orcs for nothing. Ow, this is a really brutish weapon."

"That's right."

Ian swung the greatsword in the air. Still, the strength of an orc could be seen.

"I guess you like it, you little ones."

Lenox said with a laugh, "But I wonder if that will be the case after listening to my words."

"Huh?"

"From now on, you will swing your weapon at the training grounds."

They stood at the training grounds. In addition to the two users, there were numerous orcs training with their weapons. The axe and halberd boasted the highest proportion of wielders, followed by hammers and maces. A greatsword like Ian's was rare.

They looked at Grom and Ian like they were a spectacle.

"Look at my posture."

Lenox took Grom's axe and demonstrated. It was a clean 'downward blow'. Lenox repeated the technique again. Then he showed a 'two-handed slash' with Ian's greatsword.

"Repeat this."

"How many times?"

"Until you are satisfied."

"Huh...?"



Lenox gave a loud laugh,

“If you are satisfied, then come find me.”

Lenox said before leaving. The other orcs gathered around Grom and Ian and laughed,

“Kulkukul. It is starting again!”

“Kukul. Hey, newbies. Let me tell you one thing!”

“Yes?”

“Instructor Lenox has never been satisfied once.”

“Then what...”

“Your should learn it with your body.”

The orcs laughed again,

“Kukul. Lenox’s new sheep, stay alive!”

“Kuhahaha!”

“Ahh...”

Grom sighed. He took the axe and swung it a few times in the air before stopping.

“Ian.”

“Yes?”

Ian was familiarizing himself with holding a sword again.

“Are you going to continue today?”

“Yes.”

“I’m a little tired, so I need to logout and I’ll search for a few attacks. Ah, being an orc is more exhausting than I thought.”

“I understand.”

“Then have fun, I’ll see you later.”

Grom gradually disappeared as he logged out.

At that moment, the other orcs became nervous. How did the orcs perceive his sudden disappearance? The orcs clicked their tongues as they saw Grom disappearing.

“What, someone who received the curse of the stars?”

They asked Ian,

“Are you the same?”

“Huh?”

“Have you been cursed by the stars?”

Help came while Ian was worrying about the answer.

[In the world of Elder Lord, users have received the ‘curse of the stars.’]

[Sometimes they are summoned by the Abyss and due to the curse of the stars, they are revived after dying.]

[Those who received the curse of the stars can be released from the curse by building up achievements and receiving ‘God’s forgiveness.’ If they can’t, they will be destined to suffer forever in the Abyss.]

[If NPCs know that you have been cursed by the stars, then you may be discriminated again.]

[Whatever the method, everything in the world of Elder Lord is your choice.]

Ian immediately understood the situation. The curse of the stars was a setting created

to explain the users logging out and their revival after dying. He nodded at the maker's foresight.

Ian replied honestly, "That's right."

"I see."

They didn't say anything else. In the world of Elder Lord, NPCs felt reluctant towards the users cursed by the stars.

Ian paid attention to his greatsword again. He recalled Lenox's movements. Even if his weapon was a sword, Lenox was a great warrior. Right now, to Ian, Elder Lord wasn't a game, but a new world.

He was a newcomer cursed by the stars who was sweating to become an orc warrior.

"Kuaaah!"

"Hiyahhh! I'm alive!"

"Bul'tarrrr!"

A burning spirit rose up inside Ian as he heard and saw the orcs sharpening their skills.

Ian wielded his sword.

# CHAPTER 5

## INSTRUCTOR LENOX (2)

---

Tips for surviving on the battlefield.

First:

All skills must be engraved into the subconscious and used according to one's instincts.

It would be too late if one thought through an action in their head. A decision can't be made in that short moment, so one's actions should be automatic. Only training and constant practice can make this possible.

Some lazy recruits just trained until they fell over in exhaustion. It was in order to survive. Of course, most of those recruits were killed or wounded in the first battle. After falling, they realized the sweat was actually blood and felt regret.

Ian was well aware of this, so he never put down the greatsword.

"Newbie, how do you feel?"

"Is he the apprentice? Kulkulkul."

Ian didn't rest even when the sun set. If other users saw it, then they would just consider it repeating the same action; however, for Ian, this was real life training.

He was a warrior. He would soon meet monsters and swing the sword at the enemy. He knew there was no luck on the battlefield, just his own skills and abilities. He stretched his body. He wanted to fall down. However, he kept on wielding his greatsword.

"Uraaaaaah!"

A clean cut.

"Huaaaaat!"

Ian repeated his actions of cutting and stabbing.

“Are you still continuing?”

“Welcome!”

After a while, Lenox came up to him. Ian jumped up and took an alert posture, causing Lenox to shake his head.

“There is no need for that.”

“Yes!”

“Try it again.”

Ian breathed in and grasped the greatsword again. All of the muscles in his body screamed. His waist was bowed.

“Waist up!”

Lenox shouted. Ian fixed his posture and wielded the greatsword.

“Don’t drop your head! Look ahead! Look at the enemy!”

“Uwaaaaah!”

“The enemy won’t care for your circumstances! It is hard! So what? Nobody cares! Get rid of your weaknesses!”

“Uraaaaat!”

“It is hard! Don’t relax! Swing the sword! Bigger!”

“Yiaaaaaaack!”

“Repeat it! Continue! Until you forget how to breathe!”

Ian repeated his actions. Under Lenox’s teaching, he polished the basics of swordsmanship he learned from Baek Hanho, such as stabbing and slashing. Lenox further enhanced this.

“Continue! Squeeze! Of course it will be difficult!”

“Huaat!”

“If it weren’t so hard, then everyone would be a warrior!”

“Uraaaaaah!”

“Not everyone can be a warrior!”

Lenox and Ian yelled passionately. This passion was passed onto the other orc warriors.

“You there! Are you going to fall down when that newbie over there hasn’t?”

“No!”

“I think not! No! Then why are you still down there!”

“I will stand up!”

“If you are going to fall, then crawl out of the training grounds!”

“I won’t!”

“You can enjoy the rest of your life! Now swing it!”

“Bul’tarrrr!”

The orcs started to wield their weapons while shouting. Those who collapsed during the sparring got back up and rushed at each other.

Lenox’s yells and the orc warriors’ cries rang out through Orcrox Fortress. Those who passed by the training grounds turned their heads with surprise.

Ian forcibly raised his body after he fell.

A smile emerged on his face. He hadn’t felt this feeling in a long time—the pain caused by fighting to the limits—that feeling when the pain was transformed into pleasure, and sharing this feeling with his colleagues!

[Amazing! The orc warriors have recognized the fighting spirit of the orc apprentice warrior.]

[The strength to fight without giving up, the indomitable spirit is the best virtue for orc warriors.]

[Warrior's Spirit (Common) has been acquired.]

[Your willpower is more than just mere fighting spirit. Warrior's Spirit (Common) has been upgraded to Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)!]

[30 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

The message windows popped up but Ian shook his head and didn't even read them. This moment was more important than that.

"Newbie! What is your name?"

"I am Ian!"

"Become a warrior! Then you will receive a new name!" Lenox shouted.

The ugly visage of the orc seemed to be smiling.

"So I won't remember your name!"

"Yes!"

"Become a warrior!"

"I will!"

"Swing it properly!"

[The proficiency of the skill Greatsword Technique (Common) has risen.]

[If you continue building up proficiency, you can upgrade Greatsword Technique (Common) to the Uncommon rank.]

Ian wielded his greatsword like crazy. If this was reality, then it would be harsh training. However, it was a game, and he felt like he was gaining the nature of the orc species. His limits were constantly being renewed and developing.

There was no gain without suffering.

He understood why people avoided orcs. They were a truly hardcore species.

In the distance, he saw someone's wrist being cut off in a spar. They paused for a moment before sprinkling a potion on the stump and reattaching their arms. Then they once again picked up the halberd.

"I'm alive! Bul'tarrrrr!"

The spar resumed.

Ian couldn't help but laugh. The training of real men that was hard to believe!

Once Grom returned to the training camp, he discovered orcs collapsed on the ground.

"...What is going on?"

Grom asked Ian who was lying on the ground.

"Grom is right."

"What?"

"Orc, it is hard."

Ian chuckled slightly. As the ugly orc's face twisted, Grom nodded shakily.





“Oppa, did you start the game?”

Yiyu asked him. Her brother Ian was stretching his shoulders like they were stiff.

“Yes.”

“What? More information! Where?”

“It is a secret.”

“Ah, why is it a secret?”

“It is only for my heart.”

“Okay, I don’t need to know right now. A noob, noob. You are just a complete novice.”

Ian laughed,

“Then what level are you?”

“Me? I... um...”

Her voice trailed off before she blurted out,

“I am a pretty and cute elf mystic.”

“I asked for your level, not your species and profession...”

“A wonderful elf mystic.”

“.....”

“So you know.”

Yiyu raised a finger to her mouth like she wouldn’t answer any more questions. Then a voice interrupted them.

“Boss-nim. It is done. Here.”

“Thank you. Now, your sweet potato latte.”

Ian’s shop, Cafe Reason, had a student working part time. Her name was Yeori, and she was charming with a pretty appearance. It was the reason why Yiyu took the cup with narrowed eyes.

“Hrmm...”

“You should go to school.”

“There is still plenty of time.”

“I don’t have time.”

Ian gestured with his chin. Yiyu looked back and saw that a group of female university students were entering the cafe. She looked at Ian and whispered,

“Hrmm...”

Yiyu’s eyes narrowed again.

“Boss-nim. Should I get the order? Do you want to take a break with your sister?”

“No, it’s okay.”

“Yes.”

Yiyu pulled out a 500 won coin and put it on the counter.

“Calculate it.”

“500 won is just for standing in the line...”

“You sell a lot,” Yiyu said before leaving the cafe.

Ian looked at her back and laughed.

The group of female students approached. Ian stood at the counter. In the meantime, they were talking among themselves.

“I was lucky to meet a party yesterday in Elder Lord. The party leader was a high level person. His female companion was also a high level, but they were lacking people.”

“How good.”

“It was the first time I actually saw a high level. They were also hunting orcs.”

“Wow, orcs?”

“The orcs charged with axes and bloodthirsty eyes. However, the party leader cut the orcs, leaving only the remains behind. It was completely amazing, I was enlightened yesterday.”

“I’m envious. When will I be able to do something like that? They aren’t rankers?”

“This is a chance, a chance.”

Ian’s eyebrows twitched.

“Uh, Boss-nim! Hello! We came again.”

“Boss-nim, our exams are over.”

Two of the females talked to Ian in a friendly manner,

“...Yes.”

“We’ll have a warm Americano, cappuccino... ah, two cappuccinos. And...”

Ian nodded.

“Yes.”

“...Boss-nim, is something wrong?”

Ian was famous as a warm-hearted cafe boss who always smiled gently, but a cold wind was blowing today.

“No.”

“Uhh...”

“I’ll let you know when it is ready with the bell.”

“Yes...”

Ian muttered as they turned around,

“Bul’tar...!”

Ian tilted his head.

After the drinks were served to the customers, Ian opened his phone. He needed to become as strong as possible to defend his sister. However, he couldn’t find any tips on playing as an orc. Rather, there was only talk about how they quit being an orc.

[Author: From Orc to Elf

Title: I quit being an orc.

I tried it because I thought that other people just didn’t play it well.

The conclusion is: never play as one.

Aren’t things like production, administrative work, and farmer available for females with weak hearts or those who don’t like combat? They can work under NPCs. This is why it is said that Elder Lord has implemented a true fantasy life.

However, there is no such thing for orcs. You can only be a warrior or a shaman, almost unconditionally.

In addition, users pounce when they see orcs... The funny thing is that the high level users of other races and the orc beginners areas overlap. Aren’t high level users killing orcs to gain levels and get items? NPCs are okay, since they can fight the high level users. But users?

We are treated as mobs from the start. If the NPCs can barely manage to win... we can’t handle them. Although it is realistic for people to die, it is too much when they treat

us orcs as mobs instead of people.

I'm exhausted.

The conclusion is that orcs can be raised as a character in other games, but Elder Lord is different. It is hard, there are no users, and it isn't fun.

Choose a human or an elf, and then your eyes can look at something better. Isn't love also possible? Why else is Elder Lord 19+? Huhuhuhu.]

└ Experienced an Orc: ≡ ○ They are a trash species

└ I am a Legend: In the first place, they were just a mob that was mistakenly opened up as a species. The system is too complicated, so the game makers couldn't fix it.

└ Jarapapa: Orcs are a mob ^^ They're honey for the high level users. They give decent achievement points.

Ian confirmed the content and comments.

"These bastards..."

He had felt the passion of Lenox and the orc warriors, so calling them mobs was just nonsense. At that moment, another orc related post appeared. The title, 'I am an Orc,' made Ian click it right away.

[Author: Anonymous Orc.

Title: I am an Orc.

I am an orc. From the start, I wanted to be an orc warrior or orc shaman.

Actually, I was a human, but then I encountered a NPC and reset. I was a high level user. I was dirty and dishonorable.

An orc is much better than a lousy human. It is hard, but... being an orc is much better than being a human. They have an ignorant side, but they never stab anyone in the back.

Well, I'm not going to be a ranker, but I can get rid of my everyday stress. Just think about it if you are considering starting.

Actually, I am an orc, but this isn't something that ordinary people can do. It is hard. It isn't a game, but hard work. Training is a basic part of the action. But whether it is fighting or working hard, their fighting spirits explode.

Only a true man can challenge it.

I hope that someday, users will come to see the orc area. You will see an orc player carrying twin axes. Let's share a greeting if we ever meet (bump fists).

Of course, if you are a human, then you will die.]

└ Our Local Human Leader: This cocky mob shouldn't mess with me.

└ Peanuts are Amazing: It is great ㅎㄷㄷ. Masculinity ㅇㅈㅇㅈ. Of course, if humans or elves use the same amount of effort ㅍㅍㅍ. What a vain effort.

└ Anonymous Orc (Author): You are truly dirty humans.

└ Don't be an Orc: I saw your post and tried being an orc ;;; I quit.

Ian nodded. That man was an orc.

However, he couldn't find any knowledge on orcs. There were no tips and it could be called a species filled with NPCs.

When Ian looked at other species, he found all types of tricks, scams, and introductions to NPCs.

Some NPCs couldn't be tricked, due to their high artificial intelligence, and some discriminated against those who were 'cursed by the stars.' As a result, a keyboard battle often occurred on the forums. The discrimination against users by NPCs despite it being a game caused chaos. There were many philosophical debates on morality and ethics.

There were even situations where users were deceived and cheated.

Ian shook his head.

“Humans are dirty too...”

One of the female students watching him shook her head.

“Boss-nim is weird today...”

# CHAPTER 6

## MUTANT HUNT (1)

---

Ian and Grom passed Lenox's test.

Grom brandished his axe a few times and went to Lenox, where he was beaten and started training again. Meanwhile, Ian didn't go to Lenox and stayed at the training grounds.

Therefore, a week passed by in reality like this.

Thanks to the brain acceleration system, one day of reality was five days in Elder Lord. A time acceleration of five times was applied. Thus, Ian reported the same thing for more than a month in game time.

Ian, who repeatedly trained himself, and Grom, who acted like a normal user, couldn't progress in the game for a month.

Ian realized the severity of the orc species.

Who would want to spend a month doing the basic foundations in a game? They trained repetitively everyday until they collapsed from exhaustion. It was natural that there were no users.

Then Lenox called Ian and Grom over.

"Now you are a little usable."

He looked at Ian when saying this,

"Of course, you are still greatly lacking."

This time he looked at Grom.

Ian and Grom had become an attraction in Orcrox Fortress. Both of them had become synonymous with fighting spirit. Ian trained diligently, while Grom had the habit of going over to Lenox, being beaten, and then going back to training without giving up.



“I’m still not satisfied, but that would take another 100 years, so you will now receive your first mission as an apprentice warrior.”

“Yes!”

Finally, a mission. Ian and Grom looked at each other and smiled.

“Recently, wolves have appeared to the south of Orcrox Fortress. There seems to be a shortage of food, so the orc farmers are suffering damage.”

Orc farmers. They were fresh words.

“It is suitable for both of you who desire to become warriors. Hunt the wolves and help the farmers.”

[Lenox has given you a quest.]

[The first quest. I am cheering for you. Get rid of the wicked wolves that are threatening the good-natured orc farmers!]

[You must help them!]

[First, look for the orc farmers outside of the fortress.]

[The compensation for the completion of the quest is Lenox’s recognition and achievement points. Depending on your accomplishments, there might be something more...]

A quest window was created. Grom’s eyes moved like he was also seeing it.

“Now, start.”

Then Lenox yelled at the orc warriors at the training grounds as usual.

“Don’t give up! Jump! Forget about your breathing! Do you want to be comfortable? Then quit!”

“We are orcs!”

“Bul’tarrrr!”

“Being comfortable isn’t for a warrior! Comfort makes you weak! You will only grow through pain! Fight!”

“Uwaaaaaah!”

Ian nodded.

“Really cool.”

“That is cool?”

Grom shook his head.

“I am enthusiastic.”

“I still haven’t adapted to being an orc. Speaking of which, Ian-ssi seems like you have received training like this before. Do you work out?”

“I was a soldier, a professional soldier.”

“Aha. So that’s what it was. Now I understand. Your tone and behaviour naturally fits this place. I am currently worrying over whether I should continue as an orc.”

“Come on, I will be lonely if you leave me alone.”

“Kuk, then I will stay because of Ian.”

Grom laughed.

He felt like a friendly neighborhood friend or younger brother, but he had the threatening face of an orc.

“Shall we buy some items?”

“I have no money.”

“Ah, that’s right. We can earn money by doing the wolf quest and by selling the loot we pick up. Let’s eat delicious food at that time.”

The meals at the warriors’ barracks tended to just be cafeteria food. Surprisingly, the orcs’ diets were quite palatable. Their diet was similar to that of normal people, except that they had a higher proportion of meat and that there was a lot of food.

As Ian and Grom left the fortress, the orc guards greeted them.

“Hey! It’s the newbies. Are you alive?”

“I’m alive.”

Ian and the guard’s fists met. Grom also shared the greeting with the other guard.

“You must’ve been trained properly by Instructor Lenox! Now you have a bit more flesh on you.”

The orc guards laughed,

“Is it a wolf hunting mission?”

“That’s right.”

“I see. Be careful. Lately, there have been direwolves blending in with normal wolves.”

Grom was surprised, as they were a pretty powerful monster. Ian asked,

“What if we run into them?”

“Look at the situation and run away if it is dangerous.”

The orc guard raised his finger with a serious expression.

“Keep this in mind. To survive is to be strong. Boldness isn’t courage, so if you are in danger, don’t be stubborn and run away.”

“I understand.”

“Kulkulkul, come back alive.”

Ian and Grom left the fortress.



Wolves were dangerous beasts. Ian was well aware of this.

However, he wasn't worried.

He glanced at Grom walking next to him. Big and burly.

He was also an orc, but the orc's solid body and tight muscles made catching any wolf-like beast seem simple in comparison. Although they were only slightly taller than humans, their bodies were twice as large as an adult male's body. They also had thick limbs, making them seem like gorillas.

"Are these wolves different from those in reality?" Ian asked.

"They are usually similar. Animals are almost identical to those in reality. Elder Lord is difficult due to the monsters and other species being really strong."

"Then can't the orc farmers deal with the wolves?"

Ian lifted his forearm and showed his biceps, which were at a Guinness world record level. Grom laughed.

"That's true, but there may be something unusual like the direwolves among the wolves."

Ian suddenly turned his head. He was nervous, but it was just a roe deer.

The roe deer often ran off when they saw the two orcs. A bird perched on the roe deer, causing both the roe deer to buck and the bird to fly off. The bird seemed to be playing a joke on the deer.

It was a beautiful sight.

The world of Elder Lord, which sometimes seemed more realistic and beautiful than reality, was inspiring. As he played Elder Lord, Ian seemed like he was really becoming an orc apprentice warrior.

Ian muttered the orc slogan,

“Bul’tar!”

It was a word that orcs always repeated. It was the ancient orc word meaning, ‘life’. Chanting this seemed to clear his mind.

Grom laughed,

“Ian will become a role-player later on.”

“Role-player?”

“Immersion is important in Elder Lord, as is the assimilation rate. There are many people who make a drama by acting like real NPCs. It is popular on TV and the Internet.”

“Kulkulkul, I can’t do that.”

“Look, look at that smile. Sometimes I can’t help but think that you’re a real orc. Your assimilation rate must be high.”

Ian jumped, as he could feel eyes watching them. This gaze was different from those from the animals. It resembled the ferocious gaze of the enemy on the battlefield. Ian’s body tensed up.

“Uh, what is it?”

“Who is there?”

“Who?”

Grom looked around.

“There’s nobody...”

He walked towards a bush as he looked around. The forest was filled with tall bushes and trees blocking the field of view. As Grom waved his hands in front of the bushes, hands appeared and gripped his neck.

“Uwah!”

“Who?”

Ian drew his greatsword. Grom floundered and missed his axe. The owner of the arms gradually left the bushes, revealing his appearance. He had a rough face with protruding tusks. He was an orc.

The orc asked, “Who are you?”

“...I am an orc.”

“I see that. Kulkul.”

The orc stepped on Grom’s axe that had fallen to the ground.

“Are you thieves who stole these weapons?”

Orcs could also be thieves. Ian shook his head.

“No.”

“Then?”

“We are warriors.”

“...Really?”

The orc narrowed his eyes.

Ian added, “Apprentices.”

“It is hard to believe. No matter how young, you look too weak to be warriors.”

The orc pressed harder against Grom’s neck. Grom struggled frantically.

“Okay. Then who is your instructor?”

“Lenox.”

“Oh, he is a very friendly instructor. Isn’t that right?”

“Lenox isn’t friendly at all.”

“Hrmm. I guess you know Lenox.”

He let go of Grom, who fell to the floor with a loud cry. The orc then hit Grom’s head.

“Be tense, Trainee. You should’ve expected something to emerge from the bushes.”

“Kuock...”

“These days, there are many orc bandits. Everybody has lost their honor.”

Grom stood up while wiping away his drool.

“Who are you?”

“Me?”

The orc puffed up his chest.

“I am Grant. A farmer.”

“...Farmer?”

“I work honestly and sweat while gathering the grain.”

Ian gave Grom his axe.

“It is nice to meet you.”

“Ohhh...”

“Grant. We’ve received a mission from Lenox to help the orc farmers.”

Grant burst out laughing. “You guys?”

“We might be weak, but we can still help. I heard that there is a problem with wolves.”

“Yes, that is true, but will you be able to help?”

“Believe in Lenox’s eyes, not us.”

“Indeed... Lenox wouldn’t have sent just anyone.”

Grant considered for a while and nodded.

“I understand. Follow me.”

They followed Grant. A log cabin was built not far away. There was a fence built around a field that wasn’t large. Two small orcs were using farm equipment in the field.

“Hey, are you alive?”

“Daddy!”

“Father!”

The little orcs ran forward.

Cute.

Considering the orcs’ horrible appearances, he wouldn’t have expected to think they were cute, even if they were young. However, any animal would be considered cute as they looked with wide eyes at the person patting their head.

The little ones discovered the two unfamiliar orcs and became wary.

Grom glanced at them before the introductions started.

Ian and Grom introduced themselves. The eyes of the young eyes shone when they heard that Ian and Grom were warriors who came to help Grant.

“A warrior, how awesome.”

“Warrior! Stay alive!”

They pretended to wield weapons like the warriors. Grant snorted with an affectionate expression.

Grant also had a wife living in the log cabin. She was an orc that couldn’t be called



pretty, but she greeted them with a gentle face. Ian and Grom were treated to her warm stew.

After only having cafeteria food, Ian and Grom hurriedly ate the stew. Grant's wife gazed at them happily before suddenly saying to Grom,

"You are a good person."

"...Huh?"

Grom raised his head.

"But the world is pushing you."

"What are you..."

"Make the right choice."

It sounded like a zen riddle. Grom looked at Grant with a puzzled expression. Grant explained,

"My wife has magic eyes that can weakly see destiny. It would be better to listen to her."

"Yes..."

This time, Grant's wife turned to Ian and said,

"You were born with the soul of a warrior."

"Thank you."

"But your soul has been greatly hurt by something."

"...Huh?"

"You gave up the warrior's path because of this pain... However, you picked up the weapon again in order to protect others."

Ian was stunned. Did this NPC just read his past? He got into an argument during a

war meeting and was discharged, and then he started playing this game due to his sister. Could the virtual reality system read his memories?

She gently laughed,

“I don’t know the details, but I feel like I should say this. Do what you believe in with courage.”

Ian and Grom both had confused expressions on their faces. Grant burst out laughing.

“Kulkukul. You must be surprised. What are you going to do if you are surprised at just this? You have to go with me to catch wolves.”

“Huh?”

“Didn’t you come to hunt the wolves?”

“Grant, you’ll go as well?”

“It’s my job, I have to go.”

Grant pointed to a wall, where a halberd was hanging.

“I can catch all the wolves alone, but I encountered an enemy that I need your help with.”

“What is it?”

“A mutant wolf.”

Grant lowered his voice.

“He’s just a wolf, but his size is bigger than any direwolf, and he is very smart. He had started moving the wolves methodically. That is why the farmers have recently been damaged by the wolves.”

“Ah...”

“Your help is needed. I have faith. Kulkul.”

Grant's wife looked at him with concerned eyes.

"Don't worry. I'm not someone to be killed by wolves."

"You..."

"Just cast your spells. The sweet blessings like your lips."

"Be careful."

The two of them gazed at each other with affectionate eyes and kissed lightly. Grom dropped his eyes, as if the sight wasn't great, but Ian watched them as they quietly whispered to each other. It was like watching a sad scene of lovers in a movie. Orcs had their own love life. A smile appeared on Ian's face.

Ian nodded.

"We will do our best to help you."

"Um."

Grant laughed,

"Your eyes are alive. Bul'tar!"

"Bul'tar."

Grom noticed and followed them quietly.

"...Bul'tar."

"The look in your eyes is dead."

"I am alive. B-Bul'tar."

"Dead."

# CHAPTER 7

## MUTANT HUNT (2)

---

After the meal, the three orcs set out from Grant's cabin.

[You have received the blessing of the orc shaman Andara. Physical strength and combat power will be improved for half a day.]

They received a buff from Grant's wife.

"Please be careful."

The party was led by Grant and headed further and further away from Orcrox Fortress. The dim forms of other orc farmers could be seen coming and going. They followed after, and saw the houses and fields of other orcs.

"The orcs originally didn't do farming of any sort," Grant explained as he waved to the other farmers.

"However, one day, there were orcs that committed to farming. There were many orcs who resisted, but I was impressed by the fact that they were honestly sweating as they harvested the crops."

"Were you originally a warrior?" Ian asked.

He got that impression when he first saw Grant.

"I was."

"Ohh... Did Lenox train you?"

"He did. Lenox was frightening and strict, even back then."

Apparently, Grant was older than he looked, meaning that Lenox was considerably

older.

“Shh. Kill off any sounds, we’ll soon be in their area.”

Grant was extremely wary of the wolf chief. Wolves could be seen in the distance, and looked like like they were guarding their territory. Their patrols consisted of a systematic movement that was difficult to expect from animals. Ian gulped as an unknown anxiety welled up inside him.

Even if the numbers were the same, there was a large difference between dealing with rabble and dealing with organized soldiers.

Grom said, “Let’s just run in before they get away.”

Ian shook his head.

“No.”

“They are just wolves.”

“There is something strange, it’s like they’ve been trained.”

“Trained?”

Grom cocked his head in confusion. Grant, who had been listening in on their conversation, nodded and looked at Ian.

“You are a trainee, but you seem to have some combat sense.”

“It’s nothing.”

“They aren’t just wolves, since the wolves led by the leader act as if they’ve been trained. If we just barge in, then numerous wolves will surround us.”

“Then...”

“This is giving me a headache. We can resolve it if we just catch the leader...”

Ian started thinking. In a war, it was common to split up to divide the enemy’s attention. In order to reach the boss, something needed to grab the wolves’ attention.

“Let’s try to attract their attention.”

“How? Do you mean to split up?”

“Rather...”

Ian grinned.

“The enemy of our enemy is our friend. Are there any other predators nearby?”

“Hoh...”

Grant laughed and nodded like he understood Ian’s plan.

“I see. You know how to use your head. Moreover, I even learned something from you.”

“What does that mean?”

Grom was confused because he couldn’t understand the conversation happening before him.

“Let’s use another guy, a guy who was driven away because of the pack of wolves.”

They found an animal other than the wolves. It was stronger than the pack of wolves, but was a good opponent since it was alone. They found a tiger.

“A tiger? We have to deal with a tiger and a pack of wolves?”

Grom was terrified.

“Dealing with one tiger is better than fighting a pack of wolves.”

“What are we going to do after catching the tiger?”

“We’re going to use it to lure out some wolves before entering and hitting the leader.”

They wandered around the forest for a while before finding the target. A tiger was sitting on a rock and yawning. The trio hid themselves in the bushes.

“Stun the tiger.”

“How?”

“Hit its head really well.”

Grant formed a fist.

“.....”

Grom shook his head. The tiger felt the three approaching orcs' presence and rose from its spot. Ian, Grom, Grant, and the tiger. Three versus one.

It was Ian's first battle in Elder Lord. Ian felt a good sense of tension wrapping around his body. It was the feeling he felt on the battlefield. He felt the muscles of his tough body stir and became confident that he could deal with the tiger.

The tiger roared, its low frequency cry reverberated throughout the earth. Grom's feet were shocked stiff. The tiger noticed this fact and instantly jumped at Grom. The tiger's body flying through the air was immensely large, causing even Ian to flinch for a moment.

“Grom! What are you doing?!”

“Ueeh...!”

Grom closed his eyes and waved his axe, the blind attack failing to reach the tiger. The tiger's paw pushed against Grom's shoulder as it opened its mouth. Ian calmly struck the tiger, aiming for the mouth, and causing the tiger to fall back, unable to bite Grom.

Its bloodthirsty eyes turned to Ian. At that time, Grant dramatically swung the halberd and struck the tiger's back. The impact was delivered through the thick skin, shocking the tiger.

“Don't kill it!”

“Yes!”

Ian ran and hit the tiger's head with his greatsword as the tiger threw its head back rebelliously. Grom also regained his mind and beat the tiger with the opposite end of the axe. The three orcs started to beat the tiger.

“Yip! Yelp! Yiiip!”

The tiger howled like a dog and crouched down, its eyes filling up with tears. It seemed like its earnest eyes were asking them to stop. Grant faced it and laughed and hit the tiger’s forehead with a fist.

“Yip!”

The tiger was stunned. It was a really brutish sight.

“Hoo, this guy wasn’t such a big deal.”

[You have overpowered the tiger.]

[You have beaten the pitiful tiger that was chased out by the wolves until its fighting spirit rose... You have taken one more step into the world of the orcs.]

[10 achievement points have been acquired.]

[The proficiency of Orc’s Strength (Common) and Greatsword (Common) has increased.]

He checked the message windows. If his proficiency kept rising, then eventually, his skills would be able to enter the Uncommon rank.

“Now, let’s drag this guy over to the wolves.”

The three people carried the stunned tiger on their shoulders. It was like they were recreating the training scenario where soldiers ran carrying logs. They headed back to the wolf territory where the wolves were patrolling in a cyclical route.

It was clearly a systematic method. Ian tensed up again.

They were wolves, but this was the world of Elder Lord, after all. Their abilities were possibly incomparable to those of normal wolves. The organized behavior already indicated that it was somewhat the case.



“I will send this friend in.”

Grant touched the tiger’s head as it lay on the ground to check if the tiger was listening.

“Hey, wake up.”

Grant spoke, but the tiger’s eyes still didn’t react.

“Did you hit it too hard?”

“Is it dead?”

“No, it’s still breathing.”

Grant struck the tiger’s cheek successively with one hand. It was a sight that would normally be impossible to witness happening to a tiger, also known as the king of beasts. Ian thought that the orcs really were an amazing species to achieve this amazing feat.

“Grrowl... huoong...”

The tiger’s eyelids shook. As soon as it opened its eyes, Grant hit its face again, glancing back while the tiger was recovering.

“N-Now!”

“Huaaaat!”

“Uraaaaat!”

They picked up the tiger and threw it into the middle of the pack of wolves. The tiger flew through the air. Still, the tiger had the senses of a cat and landed on its feet.

“Grrung?”

The wolves were amazed to see the angry tiger appearing out of nowhere.

“Grrrr...”

One glanced over before giving a long howl.

“Awooooo...”

“Awooooooooo...”

The other wolves came running.

The tiger quickly grasped the situation and confronted the wolf pack. Its fighting spirit wasn't bad as it glared at the wolves with an arrogant attitude. The wolves were beasts, but the tiger was the king of the beasts. It circled around the wolves, causing them to step back a little bit.

It was a dignity that couldn't be imagined. The tiger opened its mouth, as if it was mocking them, and roared loudly.

“Kuaaaang!”

The wolves panicked and withdrew, starting to call the other wolves over. Now there were dozens of wolves surrounding the tiger like ants. The wolves threatened the tiger with their numbers, but it didn't lose its dignity. It truly was the king of the beasts.

Ian was touched.

“That guy, Simba...”

“That guy's name is Simba? How do you know?”

“It's just the name I gave him...”

“I see...”

Grant nodded.

“Now that you've given him a name, he isn't just a tiger anymore.”

“.....”

“For Simba, we have to hit the leader over there.”

“Let's meet again, Simba.”

Grom looked at Ian and Grant with a strange expression. As the wolves were distracted, the three orcs moved slowly towards the leader. The roars of the tiger and the wolves' whining could be heard from behind them.

After moving through the forest, they reached a rocky hillside. There was a wolf on top that was watching the fight between the tiger and the wolves. It had black fur and looked larger than the average wolf.

"It's that guy."

"Indeed..."

Something outstanding was felt from him.

"Once we get rid of that guy, peace will return to the farmers."

"Catching a tiger, and now one wolf..."

Grom firmly held his axe and raised his body. The wolf discovered Grom and bared his teeth. Even though it was a long distance, the sound of the wolf growling rang inside their ears.

The trio walked towards the hill. The wolf didn't try to escape, instead descending the rocks with leisurely movements. However, he didn't come down on his own.

"Grrrrung..."

As the wolf snarled, other wolves appeared from behind the rocky hill. There seemed to be around 10 of them. The black wolf led the wolves to surround the three orcs.

"These guys, aren't they different from the earlier wolves?"

These wolves were all bigger, the atmosphere around them was fiercer, and their fangs were all sharper. They were a group of elite wolves. Ian raised his greatsword.

"Watch the wolves."

The wolves rushed in first.

There was a pincer attack performed on the orcs. The wolves were fast. One of them

jumped in front to lure Ian's big sword, and as he swung it, another wolf pierced the gap in the attack and aimed for his side.

"Ugh!"

Grom and Grant were also struggling. Ian elbowed a wolf in the head while hoping that he could deal with his share quickly.

The pain in his side woke up his sense of realism.

"Pant, pant... Is this really a game?" Ian muttered as he watched the leader wolf's oppressive face retreating.

The burning pain in his side that he could feel right now was no different from what he felt on the battlefield. His spirit flared up. It was easy to understand why people said that Elder Lord was difficult, and that being an orc was hard. The fighting in Elder Lord was just like fighting in reality.

However, Ian had lived in one of the harshest realities.

He could see Grom rolling on the ground. Ian's eyes stung at the sight. He wanted to help, but he needed to subdue his own opponents first. He couldn't afford to be careless.

Ian first stepped forward. The wolves withdrew as Ian's sword moved forward, sideways, and back while exposing gaps where he could be bitten. The number of wounds on his body increased.

At that moment, one wolf came flying. A wolf that had been sliced by Grant's halberd bumped into a wolf confronting Ian. As they flinched, there was a gap that Ian inserted his sword in. It pierced the wolf's belly and penetrated its internal organs.

"Yip, yiip...!"

The wolf cried out as it started trembling. Ian kicked the wolf's head with his feet and the wolf fainted. Ian pulled out his sword, revealing a blade covered in the wolf's blood.

"Now it's your turn."

Ian laughed. The remaining two wolves frantically rushed at Ian. One bit at Ian's right arm while the other aimed for his lower body.

*Kwaaack.*

The wolf used its momentum to try and chew Ian's right arm off in one go. Ian lost his grip on the greatsword due to the bite.

"This bastard...!"

Ian punched the wolf's head with his left hand. The wolf's bite was broken with a loud whine. The other wolf was still hanging onto Ian's legs, but Ian just continued to punch the first wolf. Eventually, the wolf's skull caved in.

Ian retrieved the greatsword and slashed at the wolf biting his leg. The wolf whined and retreated. Ian was drunk on the sense of fighting and swung his greatsword indiscriminately. Only the enemy and his sword were visible to him.

In the end, the wolf lost its head to Ian's sword.

"Pant... pant..."

Ian was also bloody.

Practice and training were vastly different from an actual fight. No matter how much someone trained in martial arts and prepared for battle, the pressure and stamina of an actual fight wasn't comparable to a spar.

Ian turned his head as his body sagged.

[Congratulations on your first bloody welcome as an orc! You want to fall from exhaustion, but the soul of a warrior has captured your body.]

[The Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon) has been used.]

[Orc's Recovery (Common) has been used.]

Grant was struggling. Ian had dealt with three wolves, but five were currently attached to Grant. Including the dead wolf from earlier, Grant had battled twice as many wolves as Ian.

“Help Grom!” Grant shouted. His voice grew louder as he fought. He looked like a warrior as he brandished his halberd with bloodthirsty eyes.

Ian found Grom. Ian’s eyes widened in shock. Grom was twitching with a wolf biting at his neck.

“Grom...?”

Grom’s eyes grew dim as he lay still like a corpse. Ian’s eyes popped out as he ran forward roaring wildly.

“Groooooom————!”

## CHAPTER 8

### MUTANT HUNT (3)

---

Ian roared as he rushed forward, two wolves withdrawing in response to Ian's mad dash.

"Grom!"

"Ah... orc... Fuck... hurts..."

Grom muttered. Ian grabbed the fallen Grom.

"Steady yourself! Grom! Grrooomm!"

Grom grinned with dim eyes.

"Ah... If I die, then my points and skills will fall..."

Ian's mind snapped back at Grom's words.

Ah, this was a game. Even if he died, Grom would just revive again. As he realized this, Ian's mind calmed down. His wildly beating heart sank.

"Sorry for not helping you..."

"It's nothing. I blocked my neck."

Ian tore at his clothes and bandaged the neck and other bleeding areas. A human would've died, but Grom had the thick skin and resilience of an orc.

"You would've died if you weren't an orc."

"Crude... orc..."

"I'll take care of this quest."

"Kukuku... please..."

Ian stood up.

It was just for a moment, but he had lost control when he saw Grom in a dying state. The memories and the helplessness of losing an ally on the battlefield had entered his mind. His chest seemed to collapse. He wanted to rip apart everything in front of him. If he was stronger, than he wouldn't have lost anyone.

[A warrior isn't a warrior because he is strong by himself.]

[A warrior proves his honor when he protects his friends, allies, and those precious to him.]

[Your fury has granted you the blessings of a warrior.]

[Your physical abilities will increase by 10% for 30 minutes.]

[You will only feel 50% of the pain for 30 minutes.]

The messages popped up.

Ian's eyes turned towards the black wolf still looking down and laughing at them.

"Just wait there, I'll go there soon."

Ian then plunged towards Grant. Grant was skillfully dealing with the wolves as he avoided fatal injuries and attacked the wolves. Another wolf died, making it harder for the others to approach.

At that moment, Ian stepped in from the side and swung his sword, causing the wolves to howl and prance about. Grant and Ian didn't miss the gap in their defense as they wielded their weapons. The wolves were killed by one or two weapons.

Although the leader howled encouragingly from behind, the remaining wolves died. Ian and Grant pulled the wolves' fangs out of their bodies and cleaned up.

"Grom?"



“He isn’t dead.”

He pointed to Grom. Grom was sitting down and taking deep breaths while holding the bleeding area.

“He is an orc, so he could recover from that wound.”

“Now there is only one left.”

Grant and Ian held their weapons and approached the leader. The black wolf looked down at them from a rock.

“Now it is your turn.”

“Grrrung...”

The black wolf descended from the rock and stood before them. The wolf growled,

“Ugly orc bastards...”

Grant and Ian’s eyes widened.

The wolf had just spoken. The wolf smiled before raising his head and howling towards the sky.

“Awooooo...”

“Awoooooo...”

Then the wolf’s body started changing. His body swelled as its front legs rose up, becoming a bipedal walking creature. The shadow of the giant wolf suddenly completely covered Grant and Ian.

Werewolf!

They were a completely different species from wolves. While they looked just like ordinary wolves, they were cursed beings that could turn into bipedal wild beasts. He was twice as big as an orc. The nails of both his hands were long, sharp-like daggers, while the huge face had saw blade-like teeth. The vicious eyes turned towards Ian and Grant.

“Orcs appearing... on the subject of farmers...!”

Ian’s fighting spirit soared as he laughed and spoke without any fear,

“Shut up, dog scum. You just learned how to stand on two feet.”

“Kukukuk. These orcs always come to be bitten.”

Grant whispered,

“An advanced werewolf... He is a dangerous opponent. I’ve never seen one talk before. It must be a mutation.”

“Is he strong?”

“Strong.”

Grant laughed, “Anyway, I can’t run away. I’m going.”

His smile was just like someone else’s. It was Lenox’s smile. A warrior’s smile. The courage to smile before an unknown enemy was part of the spirit of the orc warriors.

Ian smiled back at Grant. “Good.”

“Did you say you were an apprentice?”

“Yes.”

Grant grabbed his halberd and stared at the werewolf in front of them. “You will be a good warrior.”

There was no need to say anything else. Ian and Grant rushed at the same time.

The werewolf was quick. He lightly avoided their two charges and aimed for their sides. The nails tore through the air like a weapon. If his flesh was torn by that, it would be a fatal blow. Ian took a more careful attitude.

The werewolf giggled as he approached them.

“Kikik. I can’t taste orc meat. Grrung...”

“.....”

“A while ago, I chewed on orc meat and spat it out because it was too tough. Kukukuk...”

The werewolf looked at Grant and said,

“The name was... Abuchwi...”

Grant’s eyes widened.

“Abuchwi... dead?”

“I ripped him apart. Him and his family.”

The werewolf laughed.

“He was begging for the lives of his children...”

Grant ran forward and swung his halberd. The werewolf avoided it and aimed at Grant through a gap. Grant’s chest was torn apart as the werewolf said with a giggle,

“...Stupid orc.”

Grant spoke in a despairing voice,

“Abuchwi was an honest farmer.”

“Orcs farming, kikikik, how funny.”

“What would a mutation like you know about honest labour and sweating in nature?”

Grant’s eyes changed. An unknown power gathered in his body.

[The orc farmer Grant has been breathing as one with the land for a long time, realizing the joy of the harvest and the circulation of the ecosystem and nature.]

[As a warrior who lived the life of a farmer, he has gained a new enlightenment.]

[Grant has used Nature's Rebuke (Special).]

Ian saw an active skill for the first time. The basic skills that Ian possessed were all passive types. Furthermore, this was the Special rank! It seemed to be a deadly move in the game.

"Nature's mistake! Mutant wolf, return to nature!"

He swung his halberd, causing the earth to shake. A powerful wave of energy was launched. A blow that contained the power of nature!

The werewolf flew back as if he was hit by a hammer, slamming into the rock behind him. There was a loud whine as blood emerged.

"So even a werewolf can whine."

Grant approached the werewolf.

[A mutant werewolf that was born against the laws of nature.]

[For him, the blow that contained the power of nature was deadly.]

"This is the last one."

Grant raised his halberd. It was at that moment. The werewolf, who was in a critical condition, squeezed out the last of his strength and bit Grant. Grant grimaced and his body shook. As Ian ran over, the werewolf kicked Grant away. Ian caught Grant, the two of them tangling together as they rolled across the floor.

The werewolf watched Grant with glazed eyes.

"I... nature's mistake?"

The werewolf sniggered.

“How funny, you garbage orc.”

The werewolf howled.

“Awoooo...”

“Awoooooooooo...”

Somehow, the howl seemed sorrowful. The werewolf turned away from Ian and Grant and limped away. The appearance of the mutant werewolf disappeared, with the blood showing his escape route. He wouldn't be able to recover for a while.

“Grant, are you okay?”

“That guy...?”

“He escaped.”

“Huu... I didn't kill him in the end...”

Ian shook his head.

“It will be difficult for him to recover for a while.”

“Let's hope so... Well, it doesn't really matter.”

Grant laughed,

“Even if he reappears, the farmers will scold him.”

Ian burst out laughing.

[The mutant werewolf has been defeated.]

[Unfortunately, you were unable to kill it. The mutant werewolf will someday return.]

[After helping to solve Grant's problem, the name of the apprentice warrior Ian will become known.]

[You have acquired 30 achievement points. Your level has risen.]

[The title, 'Friend of Farmers', has been acquired. 'Friend of Farmers' will increase your familiarity with farmers and improve the efficiency of agricultural work.]

The message windows shone. Ian checked his status window.

[Status Window]

'Friend of Farmers' Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 3

Achievement Points: 80

Assimilation: 55%

Abilities:

Orc's Strength (Common)

Orc's Recovery (Common)

Greatsword (Common)]

Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

Nothing had greatly changed.

Ian went up to Grom. He was sitting down and holding the bandage at his neck. Ian grabbed Grom's hand.

"Ah, what a surprise!"

“Wake up. It has ended.”

“Oh, I saw the message windows. Too bad it wasn’t killed.”

Grom stood up. His neck had been pierced by a wolf’s fangs, but he hadn’t died. The orc’s flesh was phenomenal.

“Let’s go back.”

“Today passed like this... It’s rewarding.”

The sun went down. As they were trying to leave the werewolf area, a loud sound was heard in the distance. It was the cry of a beast.

“This...”

“Simba...!”

They had forgotten about him. The tiger, Simba, was still fighting the wolves. They ran with their weapons out.

Ian and Grom opened their mouths in disbelief at the sight before them. Numerous wolves had been ripped apart. The tiger Simba was glaring at the remaining wolves, who bowed and slowly backed away with their tails between their legs.

Simba was bloody and was covered with all types of injuries, but he maintained his dignity as the king of the beasts. The stripes covering the tiger’s body were manly. Simba snarled and all the wolves ran away.

Simba roared at his victory.

“Kuheeeeeeeong...!”

“.....”

*Clap. Clap. Clap.*

Ian clapped as he watched the scene. Grant and Grom also clapped. The three orcs cheered as they watched the king of the beasts reclaim his throne. Simba bowed his head, as if he was humbly receiving their praise.

[Simba, a tiger who once ruled this area, was pushed away by the wolves' tactics.]

[However, today he regained his honor as a tiger and returned to being the king of the forest!]

[Although it started with a beating, you have managed to form a hot friendship with the tiger.]

[The title, 'One who Respects the Honor of the Tigers', has been acquired! Your familiarity with tigers will rise, and you can feel some of the finer emotions of a tiger.]

He received the title and felt close to the tiger, Simba. He could feel pride and friendship in Simba.

"Simba."

"Grrrung..."

"You are a true tiger."

"Grrrrung!"

The bold battle of the king of beasts who fought against dozens of enemies! A true tiger who slaughtered wolves with an unyielding will! Simba was a warrior. Ian extended his fist and the tiger bumped it with his paw.

"Let's meet again!"

"Kuang!"



## CHAPTER 9

### WHAT PEOPLE LIVE BY (1)

---

The trio had a warm farewell with Simba before returning to Grant's cabin.

"Please deliver this for me."

"This...?"

"It has been quite a while since I've last seen Instructor Lenox."

As Grant's wife fed them warm food, Grant held out a letter.

"Thank you again for what you've done, the other farmers appreciate it as well."

"I just did what I had to do."

"You're already a warrior," Grant laughed out loud.

They promised to meet again and left Grant's house. Their tension filled bodies finally relaxed. As they walked towards Orcrox Fortress, Ian and Grom looked at each other.

"Today..."

"Shall we call it a day?"

"Yes, it's late."

Right now, it was dawn in reality.

"We finally had an adventure in the game."

"That's right. Thanks to Ian, I think my life as an orc is going well."

Grom thanked him. Without Ian, he wouldn't have been able to complete this quest, and would've died.

"Tomorrow as well?"

“Yes, if nothing happens.”

“Then let’s meet again tomorrow.”

Ian and Grom smiled and bumped fists. Within a moment, their appearances blurred as their connection to Elder Lord was terminated.



“Boss-nim, did something good happen?”

“No, does it look that way?”

“Yes, you keep smiling. Did you get a girlfriend?”

Ian smiled at the inquiry.

“Look, there’s the smile again.”

“It’s nothing.”

“What? Something is strange...”

Ian was thinking about his adventure with Grant and Grom. They got rid of the mutant wolf and formed a fierce relationship between men. A smile appeared as he recalled Grant’s final blow to the werewolf and Simba’s indomitable will against the wolves. Ian had completely fallen for the charms of Elder Lord and the orcs.

He hummed as he imagined his next adventure.

Suddenly, Ian’s phone rang. It was his little sister, Yiyu, who should’ve been listening to lectures at school at this time. What was so urgent that she would call him at this time?

“Yes, hello.”

–Oppa...!

Her voice was urgent.

“What’s going on?”

*–Oppa, you see... Right now I am at...*

Ian’s face stiffened at Yiyu’s following words.

*–The police station.*

“...What for?”

*–That...*

Ian roughly heard the situation and took off his café apron.

“Boss-nim...?”

“I need to go out for a while, so please look after this place alone.”

“What’s going on?”

“Please.”

Ian left the café.

He got in his car and stepped on the accelerator, driving towards the police station close to Yiyu’s university. Ian went inside and found Yiyu, who got up as she saw him. Her expression was grouchy. Ian hugged her.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes...”

“Are you uninjured?”

“Yes... I’m fine...”

“Then it’s okay.”

Ian ruffled Yiyu’s hair, causing her to quietly laugh. He turned his head and saw two men sitting down, both of their faces looking like a mess. One of them got up and

greeted Ian.

“Hello. I am Yiyu’s friend, Park Jungtae.”

“I’ve heard the story.”

Ian shook hands with Park Jungtae.

“And there...”

He looked at the man sitting apart from Park Jungtae.

“That person?”

He scowled at Ian and looked away.

Ian asked Yiyu, “What exactly did he say to you?”

“To me? Just... let’s have a meal today. Girls always agree when I promise to take them someplace expensive... He muttered.”

Ian raised his eyebrows.

“So you?”

“I stayed quiet, but Jungtae was next to me, and they ended up arguing...”

Fists ended up flying. Park Jungtae bowed his head like he was ashamed.

Ian sighed.

“Who struck first?”

“Almost at the same time...”

There were such moments. Just before a physical conflict, their eyes would meet and sparks would fly before they pounced at the same time. Looking at their faces, both of them seemed similar. It seemed like they thrashed around without actually knowing how to fight. There were no serious injuries or aftereffects.

Ian laughed as he looked at their faces. Yiyu poked Ian's side.

"Oppa, why are you laughing?"

"They are truly kids. Still, I'm glad that it wasn't a big deal."

"This isn't a big deal?"

"Nobody is dead or maimed."

"Please don't say such scary things, this is the police station. Won't Jungtae go to jail?"

"It'll be fine."

An agreement would be reached by both sides. Ian looked at the men.

"The words he said to you... As a senior, is he usually like that?"

"Sometimes... he flirts, but I don't care. It isn't uncommon."

Ian raised his eyebrows, causing Yiyu to laugh this time.

"What? Don't you know that I get several phone numbers from men whenever I go outside? Right, Park Jungtae?"

"Uh... well..."

Park Jungtae answered with a gloomy expression.

Ian started laughing. So that's what happened.

Park Jungtae and the other man were fighting over Yiyu. The level of injuries were similar, so it was likely to end with a mutual agreement. That's why the police officers cleared a space for them to talk.

Ian told Park Jungtae, "You fought because of Yiyu, so thank you. Still, in the future, don't swing your fists, even if there is an argument."

"Yes... I'm sorry."

“If that senior continues to bother you, then contact me.”

He handed Park Jungtae his business card. Park Jungtae’s eyes widened as he saw the name ‘Café Reason.’

“Ah, are you the boss here?”

“Yes. Do you know of it?”

“I heard the girls saying good things... The boss...” Park Jungtae smiled at Ian and continued, “He is kind.”

“Come visit sometime.”

Suddenly, there was a disturbance in the police station.

A middle-aged man was walking this way. There was oil on his face and he yelled as he walked, “Where is Sangho? Sangho! Yang Sangho!”

Ian had a bad feeling. The senior who fought Park Jungtae over Yiyu stood up.

“Yang Sangho! Hey, you stupid fool. Why did you get beaten up? You’re a disgrace to my name.”

“Father...”

“Yes, where is your opponent? Is it you?” He pointed to Park Jungtae. “You were hit by this child... Aish, you screw up.”

“.....”

“What was it about? This woman?”

Ian’s eyebrows twitched.

“Well, you both hit each other, so we can come to a mutual agreement. No, will that be enough? Should I call the police commissioner?”

The middle-aged man bragged as he raised his phone.

“Is that your guardian over there? That baby? Or that woman? Is that young man related to you? No parents?”

At that moment, the police officer in charge came back. His expression was heavy due to the disturbance.

“Oh, Guardian-nim. Please sit there quietly...”

“I should be quiet? I am a busy guy, yet I came all the way here, got it?”

“Calm down, yes?”

Ian, who was watching the scene, knocked on Yiyu’s back.

“Go back to school.”

“Oppa?”

“Don’t worry, I will handle it.”

“Still...”

“Don’t you know that you won’t receive your allowance if you’re absent from school?”

“But...”

“I’ll take care of Jungtae, so go.”

Yiyu nodded. However, she couldn’t help looking at the middle-aged man with an uneasy expression. Ian placed his hand on Yiyu’s head and grinned.

“Jung Yiyu.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you know that I can solve things?”

“Yes...”

That’s right.

Her brother, Jung Ian, always solved her problems, no matter what happened.

When she was a child, she told Ian that children were harassing her, and they became quiet after a few days. Ian found her lost items and cooked whatever she wanted to eat.

After their parents passed away, she was uneasy about their inherited debt. However, Ian just smiled and told her to believe in him, and he dealt with it all alone. He became a soldier and paid off the debt, providing her living expenses and paying for her university tuition fees.

Seven years later, when he returned to South Korea, Ian was unchanged. He always solved her problems reliably. That was why Yiyu was forced to nod.

“Oppa, thank you...”

“If you want to thank me, help out at the café.”

“That is too much. Don’t you know that it’s the exam period?”

“I hope you do well on the exams.”

“Look forward to it.”

Ian ruffled Yiyu’s hair.

Yiyu said goodbye to Park Jungtae. Someone glanced at her as she left. It was the middle-aged man talking with someone over the phone.

“Why is that girl going? Isn’t she involved?”

“.....”

“W-What is that look?”

Park Jungtae was surprised.

Ian’s expression changed the moment that Yiyu disappeared. He seemed like someone who always smiled gently. That was the story he heard about Café Reason’s boss. A warm hearted man who was always smiling, making the customer feel stable the



moment they saw Ian.

But that smile was erased the moment that Yiyu left. Now he looked like someone else.

‘My brother, he was a soldier. He used to fight in the Middle East and Africa.’

The words that Yiyu had said popped into his head. The conflicting images were now merging together.

The middle-aged man cried out, “You, you, why are you staring at me like that?”

“Don’t talk anymore.”

“Are you talking to me right now? Are you crazy? How old are you, you brat?!”

The police officer in charge said, “Both of you, please calm down.”

“Didn’t you hear what that brat said to me? Your boss, who is it? Do you know who I am? I am someone who eats with the police commissioner, understand? Hey.”

The middle-aged man searched through his wallet and pulled out his business card.

“I am a person who runs a company, you...”

“A brat who doesn’t even know shame.”

Ian approached. As Ian looked down at the man, he flinched and dropped his business card.

“Don’t you know shame?”

“Y-y-you, this...”

“Don’t you feel any shame when you look at your child?”

“Talking impolitely...”

The police officer inserted himself between the two of them.

“Now, now, calm down...”

The police officer flinched. He easily pushed the middle-aged man, but Ian didn't budge. It felt like he was pushing against a large rock. The police officer glanced at Ian with surprise before sitting both of them down.

The middle-aged man regained his bravery.

"Call your boss here. Now, there'll be a lawsuit, instead of an agreement!"

Jungtae's face became pale. His situation at home wasn't good, so Jungtae hadn't told his parents. He had no knowledge of law and couldn't afford to proceed with a lawsuit. The middle-aged man seemed to have a lot of money. Just as he saw on TV, the middle-aged man would use an expensive lawyer and his connections to turn Jungtae's life upside down.

Then Ian said, "Jungtae."

"Yes Hyung."

"I'll resolve it, so don't worry."

Ian picked up the business card that the middle-aged man dropped.

The man was talking with someone on the phone. He was disguising his son as a victim and asking the person to solve it. The man made all sorts of promises like, let's play golf next time, he would buy them a drink etc.

It was sickening.

"You over there."

Ian called out to the senior who fought with Jungtae over Yiyu.

"....."

The senior raised his head. It was an ambiguous expression. His belief in her father along with the shame of the situation appeared on his face.

"Did you apologize to Yiyu?"

"....."

“Apologize?”

The senior looked down as he shook his head. Ian waited for his answer.

Once he raised his head again, his face resembled his father who was oily and greedy.

“Why?”

“.....”

“You should be prepared to bow deeply in apology, along with that brat.” The senior exclaimed.

Ian started laughing, “That isn’t pride.”

“What nonsense are you saying?”

“You are ashamed of your father, but have decided to follow his actions.”

“Don’t speak nonsense.”

“Look.”

Ian pointed around. All the police officers and civilians had expressions of contempt on their faces.

“They are watching your father with that disgusted expression.”

“You asshole.”

“Later, those expressions will turn to you.”

The middle-aged man finished his call and got up.

“Do you know who I just called? That person...”

Ian ignored him and turned to the officer in charge. The police officer had a distressed expression on his face.

He was obviously disgusted at the actions of the powerful, but it was a world where

innocent people would be sacrificed. A scenario where the student called Park Jungtae was in trouble was painted in his head.

“Inspector-nim.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll be back after a phone call.”

The cop looked at Ian. He, the man who was the guardian of the girl who caused the fight, was consistently calm. He felt something dignified in that attitude.

“Yes.”

He expected a possible reversal of the situation.

# CHAPTER 10

## WHAT PEOPLE LIVE BY (2)

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“Did something good happen?”

“No, does it look like that?”

“Yes, you keep smiling. Do you have a boyfriend?”

Ji Hayeon smiled at her secretary’s inquiry.

“Look, you’re smiling again.”

“It’s nothing.”

“Suspicious...”

Ji Hayeon looked down at her phone. The recent call log displayed one unsaved number. She pressed the Save Contact button instead of just staring at it. The name was Raven... no, delete. She recalled the strange pronunciation that emerged from his mouth.

Ian. Jung Ian. That was his name.

She had met the man called Jung Ian a long time ago.

In the past, she had visited the Middle East for a business meeting when she was kidnapped by an international terrorist organization. Having the heir of a huge company as their hostage was a useful bargaining tool for them.

Her eyes had been covered and her limbs were bound for several days. The only thing she could hear was the Arabic language and gunfire. She managed to soothe her burning throat with lukewarm water and pieces of bread. She tried not to let go of the string of hope.

It was a strange voice that saved her.

“Ji Hayeon, is that correct?”

After incredibly loud gunshots were heard, the door opened and she unbelievably heard someone speaking Korean. The cloth covering her eyes was released. Even though she was blinded from not seeing light for a long time, she tried to look straight at the owner of the voice.

There was a man wearing black tactical gear and holding a rifle.

“I have come to rescue you.”

‘Hostage secured (English).’ He said into the radio. Thanks to the call over the radio, she was able to figure out the man’s name.

Raven. The man was called Raven.

After being rescued by him, strangers from all over the world surrounded her. While escorted to the tactical helicopter, she trembled from a habitual fear. Were they really here to save her, or were they another criminal group? The painful hours of being held hostages sparked an obsessive fear.

As she looked down from the helicopter, she saw a battlefield.

One of the soldiers saw her pale complexion and spoke to the man called Raven, who then looked at her. He removed his helmet and goggles.

That single moment was engraved into Ji Hayeon’s mind.

She never imagined that he would have such a gentle appearance. It was difficult to associate the fierce soldier with the gentle man. His kind eyes tried to reassure her while his clothes were covered with the enemy’s blood.

“It’s okay. You’re safe now.”

She felt relieved as the man smiled at her.

“From now on, I’ll protect you.”

He made her feel at ease. She started crying as all of her tension was released. The other soldiers heckled the man as he approached and awkwardly patted her

shoulders.

After returning to the base camp, mercenaries and officials dispatched from the Myeongsong Group were waiting for Ji Hayeon.

Ji Hayeon tried to express her gratitude, but she couldn't see the group of soldiers anymore. Nobody knew exactly who they were. Both her father and the chairman, Ji Eunchul, had sought out the best experts.

There was a rumor that they were a special unit from the UN, or that they were secretly run by the United States of America. There were even rumors that they were the private forces of a huge international group.

In particular, everyone was reluctant to talk about the man called Raven. Raven was seen as an incomprehensible demon or ghost, who was rumored to have been able to shoot the target in the forehead without making a single sound.

Even Chairman Ji Eunchul didn't know the exact truth.

She made a strong request and was able to briefly meet him before returning to South Korea. Ji Hayeon handed a note to Raven that contained her phone number.

"Please get in touch if you come to South Korea. I want to pay back this favor."

He just gave her an ambiguous smile.

Since then, she had never forgotten his face.

Time passed. As the successor of the Myeongsong Group, every single day was busy. She thought of him whenever she was having a particularly hard day. Was he still fighting in foreign lands? She wondered if he was saving someone in distress like her.

Then today, she received a strange number on her personal mobile phone. Only a few people knew this number. She almost didn't answer as she thought it was a wrong number, but then an unknown feeling grabbed her. Once she answered the phone, she heard a soft voice that revived the old memories.

*-Hello.*

She was able to tell at once. It was him.

*—Is this Ji Hayeon?*

*I am Raven.*

She wanted to know why he was calling her but it was a minor matter. It was nothing really, something very trivial. To her, the problem would be like stepping on an ant. The ant would be stuck to the sole of her shoes.

“What are you doing now?”

*—I own a café.*

Ji Hayeon couldn't help exclaiming. A café. It was a place that seemed to fit him. A quiet and warm place.

When he said that he was sorry for bothering Ji Hayeon, she wanted to tell him to contact her at any time. However, she hesitated. She had never once chased after a man, but she couldn't afford to be proud now.

Ji Hayeon suppressed the laugh in her voice and said,

“I'm sorry but you'll have to pay me back.”

*—How?*

“That...”

She suggested like it was a trivial matter.

“Where is the café?”

Thus, she was able to find out the location of Café Reason. She also found out that his name was Ian, not Raven. Jung Ian, such an ordinary name. She discovered that he had a pretty younger sister who attended university, and that there was a problem because of her.

He was a person who lived an everyday life. She felt a little closer to him.

Ji Hayeon wrote down each word on a memo and then handed it to her secretary.



“This...?”

Café Reason. Jung Ian. Jung Yiyu. A prestigious university. Several words seemed to be written randomly. The secretary looked at her.

“I want to know all of the information related to this.”

“I understand.”

“If the café is doing good business, the sister’s grades, the house where they live, the growth process, everything about their family.”

Then she added like she had forgotten.

“Oh, and the man at the bottom. He seems to be a nouveau rich person, so just push the problem away.”

“Yes.”

“Do not let that man do any harm to Jung Ian.”

“I understand.”

Her secretary grinned.

“This is my specialty.”

Ji Hayeon walked to the window. The building overlooked the entire city.

This was the headquarters of the world-renowned Myeongsong Group, the leading corporation in South Korea after launching Elder Lord. Ji Hayeon smiled quietly as she watched the scenery outside.



“You don’t look so good.”

Ian’s eyes opened at Hoyt’s words.

“Keep your composure. Any agitation in the heart will be revealed on the flesh.”

Hoyt was a warrior introduced by Lenox.

Grom said it would be difficult for him to connect for a while because he was busy. Therefore, Ian went to Lenox alone, who gave him a new mission.

Help the warrior Hoyt.

He was able to meet Hoyt at the entrance to Orcrox Fortress.

Hoyt was blind in one eye. He was a bald orc with a big scar and some tattoos across his face. He also sported a black eyepatch for his blind eye. Ian was nervous, as Hoyt's weapon was also a fearsome hammer.

However, after sharing a few words with him, Ian found out that Hoyt was a calm warrior.

"Have you done something that you don't want to regret?"

"How do you know that?"

"Inexperienced warriors reveal their emotions on their faces."

Hoyt paused for a moment. They had been walking east through the sea of trees. Hoyt was heading to a small town.

"If you have a weakness, never reveal it. Your shaky mind can lead to impatience. If I were an enemy, I'd provoke you to run at me like a raging bull, and then I would take advantage of the large gap in your defense."

"Yes..."

Ian nodded. Hoyt's face distorted as he grinned.

"One day, you'll meet an enemy stronger than you. However, never show any sign of weakness and always look for a way to escape or to win."

"Why?"

"Your fear is a strength for the enemy. It's the same with animals. As soon as you cower, you will become the prey, instead of the hunter. If they see your weakness, they will

gain strength and try to trample on you.”

Ian nodded.

The world of Elder Lord was really mysterious. Each NPC seemed to have their own philosophy. This world seemed more real than reality. Ian learned more in Elder Lord from Lenox, Grant, and Hoyt than he did from reality.

“Then what about this expression?”

Ian had a mock confident look on his face.

“That’s worse.”

“Why?”

“Isn’t that a face that’s asking to be hit?”

They burst out laughing.

Ian eventually had to use an old relationship due to the problem at the police station. He was strong, so he hadn’t felt good about relying on someone else. However, he forgot about all of that after connecting to Elder Lord and meeting the orc warrior.

“What will we be doing?”

Lenox only told Ian to help Hoyt.

“That... I’ll let you know when we arrive there.”

They walked together and dealt with the occasional monster. Ian encountered goblins and direwolves, but he easily faced them. Hoyt defeated them casually.

Grant, who had repelled the werewolf, didn’t seem to be a match for Hoyt. He was a great warrior and would need to be hit by a really high level user. He pointed to Ian’s greatsword.

“Your swordsmanship is aimed to deal with humans or elves, right?”

“That’s right.”

“You’ll need to act a little bit differently when you’re dealing with monsters that aren’t humanoid. Move more freely and believe in your instincts.”

[You have been taught by the experienced warrior, Hoyt.]

[The accumulated battle experience and Hoyt’s teachings have combined together and Greatsword Technique (Common) has evolved.

[Greatsword Technique (Common) has been upgraded to Orc’s Greatsword Technique (Uncommon).]

[Your level has risen.]

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 4

Achievement Points: 80

Assimilation: 55%

Abilities:

Orc’s Strength (Common)

Orc’s Recovery (Common)

Orc’s Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior’s Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

His skill was upgraded and his level rose. Ian felt like his greatsword was lighter all of

a sudden, and the large sword moved along his desired trajectory. Hoyt smiled at the sight.

“Always think. Don’t just repeat the actions like you do in the training drills. Think about what is more efficient and move.”

Ian had also heard this from his martial arts instructor, Baek Hanho. Did the creators of Elder Lord invite real martial arts practitioners to ask for advice? Ian nodded energetically.

“Thank you for your teachings.”

“It’s nothing. The duty of a warrior is to lead young orcs.”

They left the forest. As the thick trees covering their field of view disappeared, walls could be seen from far away.

[A free city where anyone can stay, Anail is the city of dreams.]

[You have moved beyond the territory of the orcs for the first time. 10 achievement points have been acquired.]

“Is this the first time you are seeing it?”

“Yes.”

“You’re a rural orc.”

Hoyt chuckled.

“This is the free city, Anail. It’s a neutral city where any species can freely come and go.”

“Then are there other species present?”

“Of course.”

Ian had never seen another species in Elder Lord, as he had only seen the orcs in Orcrox Fortress. There would be other users here. What would the humans, elves, and dwarves look like? Ian's steps became faster.

A human was guarding Anail, the free city.

"Hello."

"I am alive."

Ian was disappointed.

The guards of Orcrox Fortress stood firmly like stone statues. The orc watchmen who were difficult to approach! But Anail's guards looked like swindlers. This one draped his leather armor on a spear and leaned against the wall. He looked at Ian and Hoyt with a bad expression.

The guard signalled to open the gate.

"Well, go in. Orcs, go and don't cause any trouble."

"Thank you. Stay alive."

"It sounds like you're wishing for me to die. Are all orc greetings so weird?"

The guards started exchanging gossip about orcs. Ian's face wrinkled, but Hoyt's expression didn't change.

Thus, Ian and Hoyt entered Anail, the free city.

The composition of the city was very poor compared to Orcrox Fortress. The scale wasn't so big and there were many poor houses that seemed on the verge of collapse. There were also poor people begging for money. The orc farmers' cabins looked like wonderful mansions compared to the houses here.

Hoyt laughed at Ian.

"You still can't control your facial expressions."

"Ah..."

“Compared to Orcrox, it isn’t a great place. It was originally a place where the fugitives of each species gathered.”

Humans, dwarves, and gnomes could be seen. Their appearance wasn’t as nice as he imagined. They looked like the commoners in medieval movies. However, the beauty of the elves was extraordinary.

“Come along.”

It was a free city but orcs couldn’t be seen. Ian and Hoyt received a lot of attention as they headed to a house in a corner of the city. It was a small and old house. Hoyt stopped.

“This place...?”

“Wait.”

Hoyt frowned.

“Something is happening.”

“What...?”

Hoyt pulled out his hammer.

“Prepare your sword.”

“Huh?”

Hoyt opened the door and entered the house. Shouting was heard from inside. Ian also entered with his greatsword. However, the situation ended without Ian having to help. A woman and two children were trembling in a corner, while the three human men threatening them were instantly subdued by Hoyt.

Hoyt stepped on one of them and asked, “Were you sent by Derek?”

“Kuock... that’s right.”

“Didn’t he say he would wait?”

“The promised time has passed! Thompson ran away!”

One of the children shouted instead of Hoyt, “No! My father didn’t run away!”

Hoyt chased out the men, who left while glaring at Hoyt.

“Damn orc bastard... Interfering again...”

“Don’t think that you’re safe! Derek will kill you!”

Hoyt nodded.

“I will be ready.”

“Let’s see, dirty orc!”

The men ran away. The children ran forward and hugged Hoyt. It was strange to see human children being held by an orc, but it was sweet. The woman who seemed to be their mother approached Ian.

“Are you Hoyt’s friend...?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you for your help.”

She bowed deeply. Ian didn’t know the situation so he looked over at Hoyt. He laughed and called Ian outside.

“You must be wondering what is going on.”

“That’s right. How do you know them?”

Hoyt explained the situation.

There was a man named Thompson, who was Hoyt’s friend. One day, Hoyt barely won after fighting some human bandits and was in a critical condition. He barely reached this place, but no one tried to help an orc.

However, the man called Thompson helped Hoyt. He sprinkled a lot of potions and



took him home for treatment. Thompson and his family nursed Hoyt for a while. Therefore, Hoyt owed a life debt to Thompson.

Thompson and Hoyt became close friends.

“Thompson is a trader. At one time, he was the master of a good company, but he was betrayed by his business partner. While his partner’s betrayal was due to his nature that cannot feel doubt, that very nature also allowed him to survive.”

Thompson dreamed of a resurgence. Thanks to his old customers who remembered his personality, he was able to get another opportunity. His only problem was the issue of money.

“In the end, he borrowed money from Derek. At first, Thompson thought he was a pure investor, but he found out that Derek was just an unscrupulous loan shark.”

Thompson believed Derek and made the deal, but Derek suddenly turned around and demanded high interest. Thompson couldn’t refuse Derek. In the end, Thompson accepted Derek’s demands and left for a distant land.

The promised date with Derek was three months. Before leaving, Thompson had asked Hoyt for a favor. He would come back, so be sure to protect his wife and children until he returned. Hoyt believed him and waited.

“...When was that?”

Hoyt laughed bitterly.

“Four months ago.”

“.....”

“It’s already been over a month. Derek and his men started harassing the family, even before the deadline passed. They were going to make the missus a prostitute and sell the children as slaves.”

“Dirty...”

“I stopped by Orcrox to visit Lenox and something like this happened again.”

Then a girl ran out.

“Uncle Hoyt! Uncle I don’t know! It’s time to eat!”

A young boy held onto Hoyt’s clothing, as if he liked it very much. Hoyt smiled and the child laughed as he saw an orc’s smile.

“Enter first.”

“Yes! Come quickly! Let’s eat together!”

Ian smiled at the children’s bright gazes. He was reminded of Yiyu when she was young.

“Is there a chance that an accident happened to Thompson...?” Ian asked.

“It’s a possibility, since he had to travel through a dangerous place.”

“What will you do if he doesn’t come back?”

“...It doesn’t matter if Thompson doesn’t return.”

Hoyt pointed to his face.

Tattoos were covering half his face. Orcs who were recognized as a warrior had tattoos engraved on their body. They contained the beliefs of a warrior and had the power to strengthen the warrior.

“Thompson saved my life and is my friend. He believed in me and left his family in my care.”

Hoyt’s eyes were strong.

“A warrior never forsakes one’s faith.”

Faith. How long had it been since he last heard this word? In addition, the person said it with such strength. Compared to this orc, real human beings were ugly.

“So, young orc, will you help me?”

Ian stared into Hoyt's eyes and nodded.

"Yes, I will do my best to help."

Ian firmly bumped fists with Hoyt.

# CHAPTER 11

## INTERN STELLA

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“I can’t see the rumored rookie.” An orc remarked to Lenox as they stood at the training grounds.

It was a shaman wearing animal skin and holding a staff. Lenox nodded.

“I sent him to Hoyt.”

“Hoyt... I haven’t heard that name in a long time. Has he been doing well?”

“He’s gone away this time because he became friends with a human.”

“Human...”

The shaman touched his chin.

“It isn’t good to become entangled with them.”

“I hope the human he called friend is a man of honor.”

A few warriors greeted the shaman.

“Tashaquil! Are you alive?”

“Oh, I’m alive. Bul’tar!”

“Tashaquil!”

Tashaquil smiled and nodded.

“Hey, everyone’s alive.”

Just like Lenox was the instructor for the warriors in Orcrox Fortress, Tashaquil was the teacher for the shamans.

Beginner orcs often met with either Lenox or Tashaquil. The system determined the

user's alignment and suggested the way best suited for them. They were the two NPCs that could be called the starting point of the hell species.

Lenox stared at a collapsed warrior who jumped to his feet and started moving again.

"I see you're still strict."

"I'm treating them as warriors."

Lenox laughed.

"Grant sent me a letter."

"Grant? Didn't he become a farmer?"

"He did."

"I was expecting him to give up."

"He selected that life for himself."

At the time the Mutant Hunt quest was received, the system said that the compensation would depend on their performance. Ian and Grom didn't know it, but the letter Grant wrote to Lenox resulted in a far bigger reward.

Tashaquil waved his staff and a blessing covered the orcs practicing at the training grounds. The warriors shouted their gratitude to Tashaquil.

"That blunt person wrote a letter. What does it say?"

"He gave me his regards and talked about the rookie."

"He met the rookie?"

"Yes. I told them to help the orc farmers as a whole, but they ended up meeting Grant instead."

"What'd he say?"

"That he'll be a good warrior."

"A good warrior..."

Tashaquil started thinking.

"I have seen many warriors. Good warriors as well. But not all good warriors go the same way."

Tashaquil smiled and nodded.

"So you sent him to Hoyt?"

"That's right."

"Hoyt is an honorable man."

"It's enough as long as the rookie doesn't forget the path of honor."

"That is your answer, Lenox."

At that time, an orc appeared in front of Lenox's eyes. With a lousy rushing gait, it was Grom. Lenox laughed bitterly.

"There's another rookie."

"This one?"

"He isn't reliable, but he's coming along well."

Lenox called out to Grom. Grom jumped. He became tense as he discovered Tashaquil, who had a fierce atmosphere similar to Lenox, standing on Lenox's other side. Tashaquil waved his staff.

"I am alive. I am Tashaquil."

"I am alive! Are you the shaman instructor?"

"You know me."

Grom initially worried about whether he should become a warrior or a shaman. In fact, the system had proposed becoming a shaman, and told him to go to Basque

Village to find the shaman Tashaquil. However, Grom himself chose to become a warrior.

Lenox told Grom, "The mission to help Grant turned out well."

"Thank you."

"But I'm still not satisfied. Are you satisfied?"

"Ah, no!"

"Yes. Never be satisfied with the present. I will give you a mission."

"Alone...?"

"That's right."

Grom had learned through a whisper that Ian was on a solo quest. This would be the first quest that he proceeded on alone without Ian. In fact, it was thanks to Ian that Grom had made most of his progress as an orc. If it wasn't for Ian, then he would've already quit.

The orc really was a hell species! What quest would he have to do alone? Grom gulped.

"I understand."

"These days, a group of goblins are threatening the orcs. Go with the warriors to clean them up. Fight together."

"Uh, when?"

"Now!"

Lenox pointed behind Grom. There were a series of warriors holding weapons. They grinned as they gestured to him. It was a fearsome sight to behold. Grom seemed like he was about to cry.

"I understand... Uhh..."

Tashaquil laughed as he watched Grom walking away.

“That guy’s going to be a warrior?”

“Anyone can become a warrior.”

“Kulkukul. Indeed...”

“Tashaquil, a warrior isn’t born, but made.”

“You are still a romantic.”

“I just believe.”

Lenox grinned.

“I believe in the possibilities of all orcs.”



Ian walked around Anail.

Once he became recognized as an orc warrior someday, he would leave Orcrox Fortress and meet various other species. Just like he admired Orcrox’s scenery, Anail was overflowing with NPCs with their own intelligence and personality.

In addition to the merchants at the market welcoming customers, he also saw the mercenaries of Elder Lord who would do anything for money. Orcs were rare in Anail, so Ian gladly bumped fists with them every time he met one.

“Hey, are you alive?”

“I’m alive!”

“This is the first time I’ve seen you. A warrior?”

“I’m still an apprentice. Shaman?”

“No, no, no. I am the much cooler warlock compared to a shaman.”

“Ohh... This is the first time I’ve seen an orc warlock.”



“Don’t reduce the honor of the warlocks. I am a warlock.”

“Kulkulkul. I’ll be careful.”

“It is nice to meet you, Warrior. Warriors can be called the pride of the orcs. Become a warrior who knows honor, young man.”

“I understand. Bul’tar!”

“Bul’tar!”

The citizens glanced over at the two big orcs saying goodbye on the street.

Ian’s childhood memories returned as he wandered around the market. It was fun to follow his parents around at the market when they were alive. When they saw the young Ian, the adults at the market would give him something to eat.

“Purchase radish! Selling radish! Purchase radish! Purcha... eh?”

A woman screaming while holding a radish in both hands noticed Ian and her eyes widened.

“...?”

Ian looked at her as well. There was a white star in the middle of her forehead. A user. It was the first user he met apart from Grom.

“A user?”

“Yes.”

“Whoa, this is the first time I’ve seen an orc user. Wah, wah.”

She examined Ian with amazement. As she reached out to touch Ian, she realized that she was holding radishes in both hands and stopped.

“Do you want to buy a radish?”

“Kulkulkul. It’s okay.”

She laid down the radishes with regret-filled eyes.

“This is really the first time I’ve seen an orc user. Have you been playing for a long time?”

“Not that long. I’m a beginner.”

“I see. You should try a different race. I have friends who tried being an orc, and they all ended up quitting.”

“Kulkulkul.”

“You are like a real orc.”

A woman was selling a variety of vegetables on her own, with a sign saying ‘Anail Branch of the Blacksmith Company’ in front of her. Her eyes widened as she noticed where Ian was paying attention.

“Ahem, I am the successful applicant for the intern position at Blacksmith Company.”

“Intern?”

“Don’t ignore the interns. The Blacksmith Company is a large business in Elder Lord.”

Even in games, the preference for large companies remained.

“I’m going to become a legend of the business world and appear in [Elder Lord Times].”

[Elder Lord Times] was a program that talked about news in Elder Lord, as well as the rankers. Ian had watched videos of Elder Lord through this program before starting Elder Lord.

“Orc, what is your profession?”

“A warrior, although I am still an apprentice.”

“Truly an orc. How tough.”

The woman sighed, “It’s good that I don’t have to worry about fighting. But I have to

sell all of this today..."

She glanced at Ian.

"Are you busy?"

"I'm not busy but..."

Now was his free time. Hoyt told Ian to explore the city.

"Then please help me."

[Stella has suggested a quest.]

[The pay will be according to the results. There is a base salary of 5 silver and you will receive 30% of Stella's dividends, depending on the sales performance.]

Stella's quest! This was the first time he discovered that users could grant a quest. Ian looked at the woman, Stella, who was gazing at him earnestly.

"I'm an intern. If my performance isn't good then I can't switch to being a full-time employee!"

It was the sad reality. Anyway, it seemed fun so Ian nodded.

"I understand."

"Did you see my name in the quest window? I am Stella. Orc, what is your name?"

"I am Ian."

"That isn't an orc-like name."

Thus, Ian started to help Stella with her business.

"Purchase radish! Buy carrots! Selling cucumbers!" Stella yelled loudly. Unbecoming

of her slim figure, she yelled like an amazon, but nobody looked back.

Ian watched Stella.

“Excuse me, Mister! Do you need a radish? This is a radish, a delicious radish! You can boil it, cook it, or even sell it! Buy it!”

“I’m not buying, not buying.”

“The aunty over there! Carrots! It’s great for your body! Good for your eyes, and rich in beta-carotene. Even children like them! Carrots are great, Aunty!”

“My kids hate carrots.”

“The pretty sister over there! Elf sister! Sister, do you like green peppers? Sister, how about a basket of green peppers?”

“...Step aside.”

Ian shook his head. Stella looked over at Ian with tearful eyes.

“What? You’re just watching and not helping. Do you think you’ll be better than me at this job?”

“Isn’t it just selling?”

“Yes, I went to a private school in order to pass the interview to enter the Blacksmith Company.”

“School?”

“There are many special schools for Elder Lord.”

If there were private schools for games, it would surely be in South Korea.

“I’m broke because I used my salary to pay for the private school’s fees...”

He was reminded of Yiyu when he saw Stella. Ian sighed and said, “Okay. I will lend you my strength.”

“Bah, will Ian’s strength make a difference? Will it turn carrots into beef? You would be a wealthy merchant.”

Desperate words poured out of Stella’s mouth as she started talking. Ian placed a dirt-covered carrot in her mouth. She tried to speak while spitting it out.

“Wha for?”

“Stella, please remember this.”

Ian puffed up his chest. He was a dignified and honourable orc.

“If you want to grab the mind of a person, be aware that 70% of communication is through non-verbal behaviour, not words.”

Ian moved Stella out of the way and sat down. The people passing by looked at the orc sitting in front of a vegetable shop like he was a spectacle. Ian didn’t say anything.

“.....”

At that moment, he caught the eyes of a passerby. The man flinched at Ian’s intense gaze.

Green skin, grim expression, protruding fangs, and the huge size. It was a scary appearance. The man became nervous as Ian paid strong attention to him. An orc acting as a substitute in the market, what the hell was this? The moment that they locked eyes, the terrible orc started to lift something up.

Dagger? Axe? Hammer? Was he staring because he was going to do some act of violence? The man swallowed his saliva. Should he run?

The orc lifted something up. It was nothing other than a radish. An orc holding a radish, it was an unusual sight. Was he an orc who would throw everything around him if he got upset? Would the radish fly over right now?

His eyes looked down. As the man tried to bow his head, something unbelievable happened.

The orc placed the radish near his face and gently smiled.

“.....!”

Then the orc spoke in a loud voice, “Radish.”

“.....!”

“Do you need one?”

Did he need a radish? The man didn’t understand. However, he felt a type of strange trust from that short question. A pride that didn’t need long, flowery words! The warmth that spread from a gentle smile.

The man nodded like he was spellbound.

“I need...”

There was nothing more to say. The man paid the money and the orc handed over the radish. One radish was sold. Stella couldn’t understand why the man bought the radish and what this whole thing meant for her.

After the man bought the radish from the orc, people started to show interest. Another man walked up to the orc and said, “This is the first time that I am seeing an orc vegetable dealer. Orc, how much is this onion?”

“.....”

Ian looked at the man with blank eyes. It was a deep look.

“...What will you do with the onion?”

The man rolled his eyes at the sudden question.

“Huh? That... I don’t know. My wife will take care of it.”

He was a patriarchal man who knew nothing about cooking. Ian shook his head.

“I won’t sell you the onion.”

A declaration of refusal! The eyes of everyone watching grew bigger. What merchant would refuse to sell an item? Had the orc applied a quota to the onions? He was a

mysterious orc vegetable seller.

“Each ingredient has a value. An onion is the ultimate vegetable that can be used for all dishes. It can be used in stir-fry, steamed soup, soup, fried dishes, or as a nutritional or taste supplement. It is the guardian of the home.”

“T-Then why...?”

“I will only sell it to those who understand the value of this ingredient.”

The pride of the seller who would judge the buyer’s qualifications! It was a first for the market. The orc vegetable seller folded his arms and didn’t say anything more.

The rejected man looked between the orc and the onion with devastated eyes.

“T-Then...”

A woman came forward.

“Hrmm, he doesn’t know the value of the onion at that age because he depends on his wife instead of cooking for himself. It’s shameful!”

She was a middle-aged woman wearing a headband. She lifted a potato and said, “Orc, I want to buy a basket of potatoes.”

“Hoh...”

“What do you think I will make with this?”

“A basket of potatoes...”

The orc vegetable seller touched his chin with a troubled expression, “Hrmm... potatoes... Thinking about the health of the family... how about a boiled potato salad...?”

The middle-aged woman waved her fingers and said with a smile.

“Wrong.”

“Then what...?”

“The dish I will create...”

She said firmly. Everyone was surprised by her answer.

“Fried potatoes.”

“Fried...? Frying...?”

“Crispy potatoes fried in oil.”

“Fried... Oil... Isn’t this the enemy of health that causes hypertension, myocardial infarction, or obesity...?”

Didn’t their parents and elders always tell them to boil instead of frying?

“Yes, Mister is correct. That is possible, but they are just words.”

The middle-aged woman laughed at the orc vegetable seller’s puzzled expression.

“Isn’t it good to risk your health if you can know the taste of fried potatoes?”

“.....!”

“I would rather live today freely than tomorrow in caution. That is the value of the potatoes to me.”

“That...!”

It was big. This woman... big. Her thoughts were bigger than his. She was someone who walked the path of a gourmet without any prejudice or self-righteousness.

The orc vegetable seller stood up in amazement.

“...Rather, I have learned something from you.”

“The world is wide, Mister Orc.”

“To you... I will sell three baskets instead of just one.”

“I’ll willingly accept.”



Thus, the middle-aged woman left with three baskets of potatoes. The people who witnessed the encounter came up to the orc seller and started conveying their beliefs.

“I will make a soup with the carrots. The color will hide the identity for my children who don’t like carrots. It is my small consideration for the dark knight at the table.”

“Give me an onion. I’ll serve it with a great steak. The people of the world only look at the heroes, but the protagonists are the performers who do their part in silence.”

“Please give me garlic. I’ll eat it raw. It’s my gut feeling that I have to try the original taste of the ingredient and confront the world.”

Truly a great success! The vegetables started to quickly sell. The orc vegetable seller looked around at the empty store.

Sold out! It was a clean sweep.

He declared it to the customers, “Today, I left the land of the orcs for the first time and had a thought as I saw the various species in Anail. Do they really know the honor of the ingredients? Do they take vegetables seriously? Are they pursuing the path of cooking with their own beliefs?”

“.....”

“I was skeptical, as I figured it wouldn’t be the case. But now I have realized it. I was wrong. I’ll acknowledge my misjudgement. There are a lot more gourmets than I first thought there were in this world.”

Everyone nodded. The orc bowed.

“This orc! Today I have learned from the humans, dwarves, elves and gnomes!”

“Um!”

“Ohh!”

*Clap. Clap. Clap.*

An enthusiastic applause began. Everybody who watched him cheered and clapped. This day became a legend at the Anail Branch of the Blacksmith Company and would

be circulated throughout the city for years.

The legendary witness, Stella, who had been watching this scene from the beginning, made a rotten expression.

“...What on earth?”

## CHAPTER 12

### USER HUNTERS (1)

---

Stella questioned Ian, “What the hell was that? How did you do that?”

“Let’s see... I just became an orc vegetable seller.”

“This is nonsense...”

It was like a scene from a short-story. If she took a video and posted it on the Internet, it would be a wonderful video that would instantly become a phenomenon. Ian pondered before speaking, “I didn’t think about becoming an orc with my head.”

“Then?”

“I asked myself: What if I weren’t the human Jung Ian, but actually an orc vegetable seller? What would I do in this situation if I were an honest orc vegetable seller?”

He wasn’t from Earth, but a living orc in the world of Elder Lord.

“Then I just acted accordingly.”

“Like a role player...?”

“Role player...”

Ian laughed.

“I just became my character.”

Stella started thinking.

These things were common sense to the rankers of Elder Lord, who had the ambition to climb up. They played Elder Lord sincerely! The system followed the user’s assimilation rate. Everything changed according to how immersed they were, and their subsequent actions. Even if the people speaking had the same confidence and gestures, the world of Elder Lord responded differently depending on their mindset

and assimilation rate.

The man called Ian had a strange feeling about him; this person really enjoyed Elder Lord.

Stella nodded. "I see, I just realized something. By the way, is your real name Jung Ian? Are you Korean?"

"Yes."

"I thought you were a foreigner after hearing the name, 'Ian'."

"Haha."

In Elder Lord, one could meet users from all over the world. Thanks to the sophisticated state-of-the-art interpretation system, all of the users spoke a universal language in Elder Lord, regardless of their nationality. Ian forgot this fact since the communication was so natural. In fact, both Grom and Stella could be foreigners.

Stella smiled at Ian and said, "I'm a Korean."

"Aha, I see."

"Register me as a friend, I'll contact you often in the future."

Ian only had Grom registered as a friend at the moment. Ian accepted Stella's friend request and now they could send and receive messages to each other.

Stella asked, "How long have you been playing Elder Lord?"

"Around two weeks in reality...?"

"Really?"

Stella's eyes widened as she nodded.

"I see. In the future, Ian will become big in Elder Lord."

"Me? It's nothing. This is just a hobby."

He was just doing this because of his little sister. But now it seemed like he was enjoying Elder Lord more and more.

“Well, that’s is good. Isn’t your assimilation rate pretty high?”

“Assimilation rate?”

“In the status window.”

“Wait a minute.”

It had been a while since he looked at his status window. Ian checked his status window.

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 4

Achievement Points: 80

Assimilation: 56%

Abilities:

Orc’s Strength (Common)

Orc’s Recovery (Common)

Orc’s Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior’s Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

His assimilation rate was slightly higher than before. It started at 50% and was now at 56%.

“I have 56%.”

“Omo, really?”

“Is that high?”

“It’s pretty high. It’s a great assimilation rate, especially since you just started. Mine is between 30~40%.”

“Aha...”

“Rather, the higher the assimilation is, the more painful and realistic the game becomes. Therefore, there are a lot of people who deliberately lower the limit.”

That’s why it was painful when he fought. Ian nodded.

He hadn’t cared so far, but there was a details option in his status window. With this, he could put a limit on the assimilation rate or modify his title. He could also determine the approximate proficiency level of his skills. Orc’s Strength and Orc’s Recovery were close to reaching the Uncommon grade.

The rate of assimilation was left with no limit and his title was ‘Friend of Farmers’.

After talking more with Stella, he discovered that her level was much higher than his. In Elder Lord, the level didn’t necessarily mean strength because it depended on achievement points and skills. This allowed players of various occupations to enjoy Elder Lord, rather than just fighting.

Stella mentioned her trump skill, ‘Negotiating Eloquence’, which was at the Special grade.

“Please tell me if you have anything you want to buy next time. This skill is very strong when it comes to bargaining prices.”

“You couldn’t sell a few vegetables.”

“That... uh... I can’t say anything but... Ian is strange.”

She checked the time. “Oh, I made a promise to someone, so I need to disconnect. Today was nice. Thanks for everything, you really surprised me today. See you again.”

“Yes. Then let’s meet another time.”

“Ah right, please receive this.”

She handed a bandana to Ian. It seemed to be a worker’s bandana with the mark of the Blacksmith Company in the corner.

“Use this.”

“...?”

“It isn’t good to be a user in Anail, especially as an orc.”

“The mark can only be seen by users.”

“That’s the problem.”

Stella shrugged. “Users are scarier than NPCs.”

“...?”

“Oh, I am late. I really am going now. Then bye!”

She went into the store and disconnected in order to avoid attention. Today, he met a new friend in Elder Lord. This was why people played Elder Lord. Ian smiled happily. Then he suddenly realized.

“Wait. The quest reward...?”

He had forgotten about the reward as he was talking to her. Was this the influence of her Negotiation Eloquence skill? Next time they met, he would have to ask for it.

He wore the bandana. He quite liked it, he looked like a trendy orc with a fashion sense.

Ian headed towards Thompson’s house, where Hoyt was currently at, with a spring in his step. However, there were shadows peeking at Ian.

“That orc... he’s a user right?”

“That’s right, there’s a star on the forehead.”

“Huhu, isn’t he one crazy bastard?”

“That crazy bastard is perfect for us.”

“It is great. Shall we hunt an orc today...?”

Whispering in the alley, a white star like Ian’s shone on their foreheads.



It was dark. The night sky of Elder Lord was also beautiful. The stars from reality shone brightly in his virtual world. The galaxy, a group of stars that became a heavenly river in the sky.

Ian hummed as he looked up into the night sky. If the stars were like little children with shining eyes, the moon that shone calmly upon the world was their mother. The clean air cleared the atmosphere around him.

Ian wasn’t surprised when three humans appeared from an alley, as he had heard them approaching. However, he hadn’t lowered his head due to the beautiful stars.

“Hello Orc.”

The weapons in their hands were dully shining in the moonlight. The first thing that popped into Ian’s mind was a name.

“Derek?”

They looked at each other and shrugged.

“I have no idea who that is, but just die quietly.”

They didn’t seem to be Derek’s followers. Ian looked around, they were in a place with no people. This was the best place to attack someone.

“Orcs are a great source of achievement points.”

“He is easy to catch because he is a user, and it also raises proficiency.”

“Kikikik.”



The three of them surrounded Ian, who stepped back and calmly analyzed them. It was an unexpected incident, but Ian's head quickly entered combat mode. It was as natural as breathing for him.

He quickly figured out the enemy's information.

The tall, slim man wielding a spear was the ranged type to keep Ian in check. The other man, who was in the back holding a staff, was a support magician in the rear. The light-bodied woman who held two short swords was a close combat fighter that would disturb his field of view with dizzying movements.

"What are you looking at?"

Ian didn't respond to their words. He focused on predicting the flow of the battle and figuring out how to take the initiative. This moment would decide the outcome of the battle.

The man with the spear would stop Ian while the woman would distract him. While Ian dealt with the other two assailants, the magician in the rear would bombard him with spells. It was a familiar attack formation based on raid tactics. He needed to disrupt their rhythm.

Ian's first priority was to catch the defenseless magician. Ian purposely acted frightened.

"Excuse me... what will you do...?"

The woman burst out laughing.

"Look, he's so cute when he is frightened."

"You used to act like this when you were attacked by knights..."

As they laughed among themselves, Ian immediately struck. They weren't in an attack posture and hurriedly raised their weapon towards Ian.

"Eh eh...?"

There was a short gap in their combat power in the short moment that they weren't ready for battle. Ian rushed like crazy and thrust his greatsword at the spear and

swords. They stepped back to take an attack stance.

However, Ian ignored them and kept rushing. The magician was temporarily left unprotected and exposed to the orc warrior, his eyes clouding over in dismay.

Ian laughed. Ian's sword slashed his neck before the magician could even lift his staff. His head flew through the air.

"Kyaaak!"

The woman screamed at the sight of blood. Ian kicked the body of the magician who had lost his head. He had died before even using magic once.

[Congratulations! You have made the man who attacked you pay the price in blood.]

[50 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

[An explosive power was momentarily displayed. The skill, Orc's Strength (Common), has evolved.]

[Orc's Strength (Common) has been upgraded to Orc's Superhuman Strength (Uncommon).]

"No, that, he was clearly a user..."

"What user? This..."

The man and woman stepped back. This wasn't what they expected.

Users were weak. Apart from their combat power, their mental strength was also weak. They were modern people. They couldn't become immersed in realistic battle, where blood and guts oozed out. Therefore, most of them were passive in combat, making it possible for user hunters like these people to exist.

However, Ian was different. He was a man who lived in a reality that was as cruel as Elder Lord. A dead body wasn't able to stop him. No, it only made him more brutal.

Ian smiled as he recalled Hoyt's teachings. That's right. The fear of the enemy was his own strength.

As the bloody orc smiled, the two people backed away in horror.

"Hey, hey, we, we were wrong. That isn't a user. It doesn't seem like it."

"I saw it!"

"Ah, I don't know. He's wearing a bandana. I was mistaken, what kind of user is that?"

They fell into confusion. Ian was still a beginner. He had felt it when he hit both of their weapons when they weren't ready. Ian wouldn't have an advantage in the fight against them.

However, they were already gripped by fear. Ian approached as they fell back while raising their weapons.

"Ah, I don't know. Fight! Kill him first!"

"Uwah!"

The man thrust his spear. Ian moved his body and avoided it. He tried to dig into the gap, but the woman came up to Ian with her short swords. Two wounds occurred on both sides of Ian's body.

"We can deal with him."

"We've killed a lot of users. We can do it!"

Formidable. Their movements were practiced. How many users had they killed to move in sync like this? Ian's face distorted.

Ian remembered one of his skills. Orc's Recovery. It was an orc passive skill that healed the injuries after a considerable amount of time.

Okay. He didn't want to see the enemy's face filled with confidence anymore. He would

erase it.

Ian avoided the spear while focusing on the woman's movements. He revealed a gap around his abdomen, as if it was a mistake. The woman responded immediately. She came in deep and aimed her swords with a shout. At that moment, Ian struck back with the greatsword instead of defending his body.

*Puok.*

*Jeeook.*

Their attacks crossed. Ian had a dagger stuck in his belly, while the woman's torso was split in half.

# CHAPTER 13

## USER HUNTERS (2)

---

A cross-section of the woman's body was revealed as her parts fell to either side. The man screamed at the gory sight.

"Eri! Eri...!"

Anybody who fought in Elder Lord would have a brutal battle. There was a reason why Elder Lord was an adult game.

However, Ian wasn't concerned, despite being the person involved. He just admired the realistic representation of the human body. He looked at the sword that was stuck in his abdomen. He would leave it alone and get rid of the other guy first. Ian lifted his bloody greatsword, its shadow covering the face of the spear user.

The man lost his strength and flopped down. Then he whispered.

"As much as possible... no pain..."

Ian nodded and swung his sword straight downwards. His first PK experience in Elder Lord had ended with his victory.

[You have gotten rid of all the assailants.]

[200 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

[Orc's Recovery (Common) has been used.]

[You have recovered from countless wounds suffered in many battles.]

[Orc's Recovery (Common) has been promoted to Orc's Vitality (Uncommon)].

[There is a short sword stuck in your abdomen. It will be dangerous if left untreated.]

[Status Window]

‘Friend of Farmers’ Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 6

Achievement Points: 330

Assimilation: 57%

Abilities:

Orc’s Superhuman Strength (Uncommon)

Orc’s Vitality (Uncommon)

Orc’s Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior’s Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

Two of his skills had been upgraded after taking care of the users. It made sense why these guys hunted users. The bodies of the dead users turned into white particles, drifting like dandelion seeds in the wind, until they couldn’t be seen anymore.

The three bodies of the men and woman disappeared, leaving only their equipment behind.

“...Are these mine now?”

This was another reason to hunt other users.

Ian pulled out the sword stuck in his abdomen. He swallowed back the pain and bandaged the wounds with the clothes of the user hunters. He scanned the equipment and found nothing special. They were the ordinary clothes and weapons sold at the blacksmiths. All of them had the Common rating.

He grabbed the spear, the swords, and the staff, since they could be sold. Ian and raised his head and saw an empty, vacant lot. There was no one here.

The battle was over. Ian felt something unfamiliar swelling up inside him. He had defeated criminals in Elder Lord.

Ian murmured to himself, "Today, I met three wicked people and killed them, implementing justice."

An orc who knew honor!

"Where are the people who know honor?"

The orc who fought against injustice!

Great. It was like a scene from a movie. However, he felt strangely ashamed. Ian's face turned red, moving quickly in case someone had heard him. Soon after Ian's figure disappeared. Only the clothing of the assailants remained in the back alley of Anail.

"...Amazing."

Then a woman walked out from the shadows. She was a woman wearing all black, with a mask covering her face. The tight clothes revealed her alluring body.

"I came to cover the user hunters, only to hit a jackpot."

She looked at the place where the assailants were.

Jackson. Brown. Eri. They were user hunters active in the Anail area, and were known to attack anyone, regardless of whether they were beginners or not. They used a friendly approach to get close to the user, only to stab them in the back and gain their items and achievement points. They aimed solely at users that weren't familiar with combat. Therefore, there were complaints about the trio of killers.

However, they hit an orc NPC by accident and suffered.

The battle scene was amazing. A boldness that the users couldn't follow! A cruelty that wasn't afraid of blood! The decisiveness of his attacks! A soliloquy after the battle ended!

She came up with a title for her video.

“The mannerless user hunters, justice is implemented!”

Their bad behavior had already been uploaded. The scenes of them ambushing a user, only to be killed, would be an explosive hit. She didn’t know why, but it seemed like they had mistaken the NPC for a user.

She nodded as she checked the video that she recorded. People would go crazy over it. The sight of wicked people forgetting themselves and falling into the pit of hell. There was even a nice soliloquy of justice!

She glanced around as she ended the connection.



Park Jungtae smiled as he heard Yiyu’s voice next to him.

“Hey, Park Jungtae. What level are you?”

“I don’t have a capsule.”

“Then go to a capsule room.

“Stop playing the game and focus on your life. Didn’t you do badly on the exam?”

“Wow, how cowardly to attack with that fact.”

The two were sitting in a cafe on campus. After their economics lecture ended, they decided to spend some time together. As the two of them were talking, someone called out Yiyu’s name.

“Ah, Yiyu! Jung Yiyu!”

“Park Jungtae as well?”

A group of girls rushed over and sat at their table.

“What are the two of you doing?”



“Isn’t this strange? Perhaps? Jungtae, wow~ Park Jungtae, not bad~.”

Yiyu laughed, “If you are just here to talk nonsense, then leave.”

“Isn’t that too harsh? Do you want me to keep calling you Rabbit? Didn’t a rabbit give you a hard time?”

“Ah, noisy.”

After Yiyu died from a rabbit in Elder Lord, her friends kept on calling her Rabbit.

“By the way, have you seen it?” Her friend asked.

“What?”

“Youvidser Laney’s video.”

Youvidser. Youvids was the world’s largest video upload site, and its content creators were called Youvidsers. Of course, even in Youvids, most of the mainstream content was related to Elder Lord.

Laney was a star who emerged after reporting on various types of wicked players, filming their wickedness in gruesome detail. Rumor has it that the users captured on video weren’t even aware of Laney’s existence because she was such a high level assassin.

“Seen what?” Yiyu asked.

“Look look, it is a bit hit. The three user hunters humiliation video.”

She pulled out her tablet. Yiyu, Park Jungtae and her friends focused on the tablet.

[Laney’s ‘Justice is implemented on the user hunters.’]

The opening scene was of three users chuckling with one orc standing in front of them. Laney edited the caption.

[The mannerless user hunters, they've found an orc user!]

"Orc? An orc user?"

"Keep watching."

[As usual, they are trying to ambush the user...]

They laughed as the orc hesitated. But after a short moment, the orc rushed and instantly cut off the magician's head.

"Whoa."

"Isn't that crazy?"

The dismay on the user hunters' faces was caught on the screen.

[But ding! That is incorrect! An NPC!]

It became a 2 vs 1 fight. The user hunters were familiar with fighting, so they attacked the orc pretty well. The orc went on the defensive.

"Isn't the orc losing?"

"It is coming soon."

At that time, the woman stabbed the orc with a short sword. The orc was waiting for that moment and cut the female hunter's torso. The user hunter's body was split in

half.

Yiyu flinched as she watched the brutal scene.

“I can see the flesh and bones.”

Park Jungtae admired the sight. The woman’s body was broken and the lone spearman soon fell down. He whispered something to the orc and the orc nodded. Then he beheaded the user.

3 vs 1! Their power didn’t differ much. Rather, the user hunters were superior in power. However, the skill and the boldness of the orc overwhelmed them. It was truly a fierce battle!

“This is why you shouldn’t touch NPCs.”

The corpses of the users turned white and disappeared. The orc grabbed their weapons and stood still. The video didn’t end there.

“...There’s more?”

“Listen carefully.”

The orc stood there, looking into the air. Then the orc opened his mouth.

*-Today, I met three wicked people and killed them, implementing justice.*

The orc formed a fist.

*-Where are the people who know honor?*

It was a loud voice. The orc disappeared into the darkness of the city after speaking.

Park Jungtae and Yiyu’s mouths dropped open.

“...Amazing.”

“...Really cool.”

An unknown spirit was blazing from him! There was an explosion of comments.

└ Elder Lord's Path: I'm going to become an orc.

└ Arigato: 222222.

└ I am the Best: 222222.

└ Cooking Fondant: 222222.

└ Woo In-sung's Secret: 2222ㄸㄸ

└ (View more)

└ My name is Yoda: We are going crazy;;; Protect honor;;

└ Assassination King: I have to reevaluate hunting orc users.

└ Dragon Bra: It's just a staged scene ㄹ ㅇ

└ Ninano: He really seems like a NPC ;;; An orc who clears houses.

└ Orc Hunter: An orc is a mob.

└ Number 1 Orc User Maguchwi: Dirty humans!! Death!! Shout Bul'tar!!!!

└ Camper: The real one has appeared!!!!

└ Oscar Hazard: (Explanation) Maguchwi quit being an orc shaman ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ Truly an orc user.

└ I am the Upright Beta: I am still an orc. ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ

└ Jungle King Wenger: Weren't you whining that you should reset? ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ ㄹ

└ (View more)

└ Normal Person: I am someone who hasn't been an orc...

└ Americano: The orc's tears ㄸ ㄸ

└ Slow Angel: ㄸ ㄸ Tears of an orc user...

↳ Number 2 Orc User Kuwakta: Shout!!!!!! Bul'tar!!!!!!

↳ Oscar hazard: ㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋ A festival for orc users

↳ Delicious Omurice: Orc users are going crazy ㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋ

↳ Psychedelia: ㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋ Keep quiet orc users

↳ Orc Never Die: ㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋㅋ What is Bul'tar?

↳ (View more)

(View more)

The general users and orc users who believed in orcs were all enthusiastic. Yiyu's eyes shone as she saw the comments under the videos, then she asked, "Should I go be an orc?"

"Are you crazy?"

"Is that so?"

"Don't be an orc."

Park Jungtae also thought about trying out an orc in Elder Lord, but he soon gave up. The character that he had been playing for a while was human. He was a blacksmith but he was busy with his part time job and school. It was tough to enjoy the game.

Soon, it was time for his next lecture. Park Jungtae got up.

"I have to go."

"Uh. Bye. See you tomorrow."

"Jungtae, bai!"

"Bye!"

Park Jungtae separated from the group and walked through the university.

“Hey, Park Jungtae!

“Eh?”

A foreign car stopped on the side of the campus. The car door opened and someone run towards him. Park Jungtae’s face distorted. It was the senior he got into a fight with over Yiyu.

The senior cried out, “You, fuck, what did you do? Eh? What’s going on?”

“What?”

“I’ll apologize, yes? Cancel everything, I’ll pay for all your medical expenses.”

“W-What?”

“My father’s company will be ruined!”

“Why are you telling me...”

“Using common sense, you’re the only one! Why did the customers suddenly cancel their accounts! They have all abandoned our company! After we fought...”

His face was like he lost his soul. The senior didn’t pay any attention to the gazes around him as he clung onto Jungtae.

Somebody popped into Park Jungtae’s head at the words. It was Yiyu’s brother and the owner of Café Reason, Jung Ian.

The senior cried out, “I am acting like this, eh? I didn’t know you were so strong. Really...”

“No, Senior. I really don’t know. Would I have a part time job if I could do that? I’m trying to make a living.”

“Ah...”

“I don’t understand, but I hope it will be resolved. Now I have to go to a lecture.”

“Hey, agreement! Let’s come to an agreement! Eh? I can write a memorandum. Write

it now!”

“Now?”

“Yes, now.”

Park Jungtae nodded.

‘Jungtae, I’ll resolve it so don’t worry.’

As Ian said, Jungtae didn’t know what happened, but everything was resolved.

# CHAPTER 14

## ABOUT LIFE (1)

---

Ian spent several days at Thompson's home. Derek's men kept threatening them, so Hoyt and Ian took turns protecting the house.

Meanwhile, Ian was trained by Hoyt.

In Elder Lord, skills were divided into various ratings. Common grade meant one was around the ordinary level, while Uncommon was better even better than that. After Uncommon was Special, and then after that was the Rare rank. Following Rare, the current highest known rank, was Essence. It meant literally realizing the essence of the skill.

Among the famous rankers of Elder Lord, Choi Hansung's skill, 'Battlefield Penetrating Eyes', was revealed to be at the Essence grade.

Most of the user's skills were Common, Uncommon, or the occasional Special grade skills. Elder Lord resembled reality. Everyone's abilities were different, and it wasn't easy for a user to reach a level beyond Special. Therefore, most of them were enthusiastic about gathering as many skills as possible.

"Do you believe in your abilities?"

"I believe in them to a certain extent."

Ian replied.

He learned martial arts. In other words, he was unusually strong. Of course, he trained hard, but it wasn't like his colleagues didn't work hard either. Ian knew that he had a talent for violence. Talented people would feel like they were talented.

Hoyt nodded.

"Certainly, you have talent. However, keep in mind that talent isn't the only thing needed to become strong."



“Are you talking about effort?”

“I think that the word effort is too light.”

He laughed.

“Obsession.”

“.....”

“We can be anything.”

He didn’t want to, but he acknowledged it. It wasn’t strange to call it a type of power.

Ian had lived in poverty, and his parents’ business hadn’t been good in his childhood. After his parents died, he inherited their debt and headed to the battlefield to make money. It was a harsh life that he could never boast about to anyone else.

He killed and killed again. It was all for the sake of money. The targets weren’t always evil.

Therefore, if he acknowledged Hoyt, he would have to blame himself for choosing life on the battlefield without trying any other ways. Indeed, such guilt tormented his heart.

Ian continued, “Not everyone can do that.”

“Everyone...”

Hoyt smiled and aimed his hammer at Ian.

“I am not talking to everyone right now.”

“Then...”

“I am talking to you right now.”

Ian looked at him. Hoyt’s body, full of battle scars and tattoos, was proof of his experience over the past years.

“Are you a common person?”

“I...”

“Do you want to be a warrior?”

“I want to be one.”

“Everyone... If you are like everyone else, then you can’t be a warrior. A warrior has to go on a path that no one else has traveled before.”

Hoyt moved back and raised the hammer with both of his hands.

“Look closely.”

Hoyt took a deep breath. Ian flinched. The atmosphere seemed to be shaking, and he could feel something coming from Hoyt’s body.

Strength, it wasn’t the same as energy. Rather, it was the opposite. As a result, Hoyt’s presence became blurred. He was becoming a part of this world. Then again, he became separate from the world.

Hoyt moved his hammer. It was a slow motion. However, Ian witnessed the world moving in reverse. The world broke with the simple movements of the hammer.

Ian wanted to sit down, as he couldn’t believe his eyes. This, this was the pinnacle state that Baek Hanho said Ian was unlikely to reach in his lifetime. This was the domain of the ancient military arts.

It was short, but seemed to last for an eternity. Hoyt raised his hammer and restored his breathing. He looked at Ian and smiled.

“Did you see?”

“Ah...”

“I was hoping so, but you really are amazing to see it.”

“This...”

Hoyt put down his hammer. Sweat rolled down his face.

“When I was your age, there was a really talented orc. I was stupid compared to him. Something that he took one try to learn would take me 20 or 30 attempts.”

“Hoyt...?”

“That’s right. He really was a genius. He would make an instant judgement and rush at the opponent with marvelous skill. He had a brilliant wit that I could never reach in my lifetime. So, I desperately asked the instructor. What could I do to become stronger?”

Hoyt raised the hand at his waist. Ian handed him a towel.

“The instructor showed me a number of ways to wield the weapon. And that was enough. I didn’t need to know anything else, he said.”

It was the early stages of the pinnacle.

“I believed him and repeated his actions like crazy. People laughed at me like it was ridiculous, but I didn’t give up. I worked constantly without compromise. 10,000 times, 100,000 times, and more. Then at some point, I became a warrior.”

Ian looked at his sword. He could do the same.

“You definitely have talent,” Hoyt said.

“Yes.”

“That is why I am saying this.”

“Yes...”

“Go towards the pinnacle, and beyond me.”

Ian’s martial arts were stagnant. It had undergone further development on the battlefield, but was blocked again by a wall. He couldn’t go beyond that. Ian inwardly acknowledged his limits. But today, he saw beyond it. It was inside a game.

[Congratulations! You have witnessed a Pinnacle grade skill.]

[You feel thrilled by the high level of martial arts and the reality of the Pinnacle grade skill!]

[A Pinnacle grade skill is only achieved by the real powerhouses in the world of Elder Lord.]

[The title 'Person Pursuing the Pinnacle' has been acquired. All skills will gain proficiency until they reach the Pinnacle grade.]

[You have acquired the Mind's Eye (Special) skill that allows you to understand the reality of the target.]

[50 achievement points have been acquired.]

[Your level has risen.]

[Status Window]

'Person Pursuing the Pinnacle' Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 7

Achievement Points: 380

Assimilation: 57%

Abilities:

Orc's Superhuman Strength (Uncommon)

Orc's Vitality (Uncommon)

Orc's Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon)

## Mind's Eye (Special)

The messages popped up, but Ian shook his head. Those things didn't matter right now.

His heart pounded. He wanted to swing his sword. He wanted to move his body. Not just in the game, but in reality as well. Ian still couldn't believe that he saw it.

"It's hard since it's the first time I've done it in quite a while."

"It is really wonderful."

"You are even more amazing. You don't seem like an apprentice, since even some of the best warriors would only see a common swing."

Hoyt looked at the sun. He had the ability to calculate the approximate time according to the location of the sun, a skill that Ian didn't have.

"It's time for Ray to finish."

Ian said, "I'll go."

"Please."

Ian started moving.

Ray, the oldest of Thompson's children, was attending school. It wasn't a regular training curriculum provided by the government like in Ian's reality, but a private institute run by various intellectual scholars. Thompson believed that his children should be in school, regardless of his economic situation. It was an educational facility that the guards of Anail protected, so Derek couldn't reach it with his hands.

Ian headed towards the school. It had been a few days, so the people of Anail were used to seeing orcs. Some people of different species greeted Ian.

"Uh, aren't you selling vegetables now?"

"It was a part-time job."

“Too bad.”

“Stella is still selling fresh vegetables.”

“I can’t trust that girl.”

“Kulkulkul.”

The reputation system! Reputation existed in Elder Lord. Ian became known in Anail through positive activities, such as selling vegetables and protecting the Thompson family from the vicious loan shark. The attitudes of the NPCs changed from what they were before. They didn’t discriminate against orcs any longer...

Ian entered Ray’s school with light footsteps. However, the atmosphere was weird. The children were forming a circle around something. This was the scene of a typical kid’s fight. There was a familiar face inside.

Ray.

Ian watched closely without interrupting. Ray and another child were tangled together as they rolled across the ground. Fists were aimed at the other person. Ian touched the shoulder of a child watching on the outside.

“Who... heok?”

The child’s face turned pale as he was faced with the rugged face of an orc. Ian asked quietly, “Why are they fighting?”

“That... Robin teased Ray and said that his dad had run away.”

“Hmm...”

Ray was pretty tough. Even though it was an even fight, Ray soon overpowered Robin. He got on top of Robin and swung his fist. Robin covered his face with his arms. Ray’s fist hit the guard.

At this moment, Ian interrupted.

“Stop, stop.”

The children separated like the how the Sea split for Moses after hearing the orc's words. Ray also stopped moving.

"You shouldn't fight."

Ian pulled them apart. Ray released Robin and started panting, while Robin stepped back with a nosebleed.

"If you say it one more time, then I'll kill you," Ray declared, his eyes filled with hate. That Robin bastard hadn't died.

"That's right, your dad isn't here right now."

"This bastard!"

Ian stopped Ray, who shook his head as he was grabbed by Ian.

"Mister! That asshole, look at what he is saying! I'll kill him!"

Ian was stumped. When he was a child, he beat someone up for cursing at his family. Ian couldn't say to not use violence because he understood Ray. In addition, this was Elder Lord, where fists were close to being the law, unlike in the real world. It wasn't an ideal story. In the end, humans had to learn how to survive on their own in this world.

Ian just shook his head.

"It is done, so let's stop here. You don't want to fight anymore, do you?"

Ray was still enthusiastic, but Robin didn't want to fight any longer. He wiped his bloody nose with his sleeve. Ian dispersed the children.

He took Ray and started heading back home. Ian had raised Yiyu, but she didn't experience this situation because she was a girl. She would just quarrel with her friends and then they would make up.

"Mister, I want to become stronger by learning the sword like you."

"Why?"

“If I get stronger, then I can kill those guys.”

Ian chuckled in a low voice.

“Do you want to kill them?”

“Yes.”

“Isn’t that too much?”

“I am angry.”

“You can’t kill a person just because you don’t like them, Ray.”

“.....”

“There is always someone stronger than you. Then what if that person appears and kills a person you care about?”

“Then I will die fighting them, like a man.”

Ian looked at Ray. Ray avoided his gaze as if he knew what Ian was thinking.

“That isn’t a manly thing to do.”

“.....”

“Ray. It is easy to speak about death.”

Ian patted the head of the silent Ray. He seemed more suited to the world of Elder Lord. He received a secret killing technique from Baek Hanho and survived on the battlefield. These things had no place in the real world. He might run a cafe that made coffee, but he knew more about fighting and killing, life and death, than anyone else.

Ian scratched his head. His mind was complicated. At that time, some people appeared and surrounded Ian and Ray.

“Hello Orc, we meet again.”

This face. It was one of Derek’s underlings who broke into Thompson’s house.



“That monster isn’t here this time, so won’t it be different?”

All of them were holding weapons. Their purpose was obvious, even to a blind man.

Ian placed Ray behind him and grabbed his sword handle. He measured their power. If they were his opponents, then he would be able to get away with Ray somehow.

But there was a man watching from the rear. A middle-aged man with a beard looked at Ian with a bored face. He wore expensive clothing and held a sword. A bright aura shone around the sharp blade.

“Are you a friend of Hoyt...?”

A low and hoarse voice emerged from the man. He stepped forward. A strong force was emitted from his whole body. Ian was nervous.

Strong. Clearly stronger than Ian.

“I am Derek, Young Man.”

Ian gathered his strength as he listened. He had to hang in there. Looking at Derek’s nonchalant face, Ian felt like an egg before an approaching knife. His entire body was ready. Derek approached.

“The interest... I will have you pay for it with your body.”

## CHAPTER 15

### ABOUT LIFE (2)

---

The residents fled after seeing Derek. Everyone knew Derek, the notorious loan shark who dominated Anail's back alleys.

Ian looked around. There didn't seem to be any escape path for him to take. Derek's men formed a circle around Ian to prevent him from fleeing.

What should he do? Ian's eyes sunk.

Derek and his five people. Not only that, but Derek was much stronger than the rest of his people. It was best not to fight.

"Derek, it's best that you don't fight me."

"Why do you think that?"

"Do you have the confidence to stop Hoyt's anger?"

He mentioned Hoyt. Derek's failure to harm the Thompson family was entirely due to Hoyt. However, unlike his expectations, Derek smiled quietly.

Ian became uncomfortable. Derek's smile and laid back behaviour was the exact opposite of what he imagined. Ian expected him to be a sleazy money lender, but Derek was much bigger than that. His strength was like a warrior, exuding a sharp atmosphere that Ian had never felt before.

Ian realized that the situation was going out of control. Now he had to gamble.

Derek raised his sword.

"You won't be going alone, so don't worry."

He laughed and imitated Ian's words.

"Young Man, it would be best if you didn't fight back."

Ian could feel Ray's hands trembling at his waist. Ian tried to get help from Stella, whom he met in Anail, but she wasn't connected.

It was a dilemma. Ian also raised his greatsword. The important thing was Ray. For his survival, Ian had to retreat.

Ian whispered to Ray, "Hold on tightly to my neck."

"Huh...?"

Ian lifted Ray up and placed him on his back. Ray reflexively grabbed his neck as Ian rushed backwards. It was in the opposite direction of Derek. The subordinates gathered in the direction of Ian's escape. He needed to defeat the one in front of him before they all gathered.

However, the underling was different from the user hunters that Ian had overpowered. He calmly swung his sword and slowed Ian down. As Ian stopped, the other underlings caught up. Ian was once again surrounded and the siege was narrowed further.

Beyond them, Derek was approaching. "Even if you struggle, the result is the same."

"....."

Ian decided to buy some time.

"No matter how dirty a loan shark is, you shouldn't act unfairly."

"Unfairly...?"

"Yes, Derek. Let's have a fair 1 on 1 fight," Ian said.

Derek burst out laughing.

"Puhahaha. What are you saying, Orc?"

"Derek is a thoroughly practical person. Do you think that I would speak nonsense?"

"Have a 1 on 1 with your friends in heaven. Kilkil."

Derek's mouth rose.

“...Hrmm.”

Ian ignored the underlings and told Derek.

“Surely you aren’t scared of a 1 on 1 fight?”

“What an interesting friend.”

Ian didn’t expect him to agree to the blatant provocation, but Derek abruptly nodded.

“Okay.”

His subordinates’ eyes widened.

“Boss...?”

“Why, do you have no confidence?”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

Derek placed a knife at the neck of an underling and said, “Surely Derek’s men aren’t afraid of an orc...?”

“Ah, no!”

“So fight him. Alone.”

“Yes, yep!”

Derek’s subordinate vigorously nodded his head and pulled out his sword as he stepped forward. Ian put Ray down while ignoring the ominous feeling in the back of his mind.

“Ray, stay back. If there is a gap, then run away.”

“Mister...”

“Don’t worry. Don’t you believe in an orc warrior?”

Ian laughed. Ray's face became tearful. It was a familiar scene.

'Ray, don't you believe in Father?'

His father Thompson had left after saying the same remark as Ian. He still hadn't come back. Ray wanted to hold onto Ian, but he was already moving forward and pointing at Derek's subordinate with his sword.

"Mister..."

The battle began. Ian came out first. He tried to draw the opponent to his side, but the person stepped back because he felt the incredible atmosphere of Orc's Superhuman Strength.

This was fortunate for Ian. Ian just wanted to buy some time. Eventually, Hoyt would hear about this and come running. Ian moved forward with no substance in his attacks. The opponent kept avoiding. Derek's expression hardened as he saw both of them.

"How boring," Derek muttered.

Then the expression on the face of the underling changed.

"Uhh... Uaaaah!"

The opponent rushed at Ian, who stepped back to avoid the incoming attacks. The attacker and defender had changed, but the battle was a repetition of the previous one.

Derek burst out laughing.

"Young orc."

"....."

"I know your intentions, but you should also pay attention to me."

Derek gestured with his chin. Derek's subordinates once again raised their weapons.

"If you don't properly entertain me, then this will be over."

Ian took a deep breath. His choices had disappeared. There was only one road remaining now. He had no other choice but to commit to a last hurrah on this path.

Ian's muscles swelled up.

"Bul'tar————!"

Ian charged towards the opponent. His greatsword descended with force towards the opponent's weapon who twisted his body to avoid it. Ian pursued him and slashed him.

"Kuok!"

His opponent blocked it. The two blades faced each other and it became a battle of strength. Ian put pressure on the opponent. The other person kicked Ian in the abdomen.

"Huuk!"

"Die, orc bastard!"

The underling stabbed at his neck. Ian quickly ducked and rolled across the ground to avoid it. The sword missed. Again, the sword descended towards the body of Ian, who had fallen. Ian could barely escape by rolling to left and right.

He gritted his teeth.

"Horyaaaaah!"

Ian stood up and charged again. His opponent aimed the blade, but Ian didn't care. He pushed ahead and slashed the opponent with his sword, despite the blade aiming at him. The opponent fell to the floor.

Ian got on top of him, but there was still the blade between them. Ian paused for a short moment. He wielded his fist before he lost his spirit.

"Waaaah!"

The orc's fist struck the underling's face.

*Peeok! Peeok! Peeok!*

Ian's punches turned the subordinate's face into a rice cake. Ian's hand stopped as he recovered his spirit.

There was a blade at Ian's neck. It was another of Derek's subordinates.

"Stop. You can't kill any of my men."

Ian stood up with a wince.

"Is he alive?"

"Yes, he is still breathing."

"Foolish guy."

Derek placed his foot on the head of the collapsed underling.

"Losing to an inexperienced orc..."

Ian stepped back and picked up his sword. There were still four subordinates remaining. Ian asked with a grin.

"Who's next?"



He breathed out. His body was a wreck.

[Orc's Vitality (Uncommon) is being used.]

[The bleeding is severe. Please seek medical attention.]

[Your right arm won't move. Your actions are constrained.]

The third subordinate was lying down with a pierced abdomen. Now there were only two left, excluding Derek.

Ian's head drooped against his will. He wanted to collapse. He wanted to rest. It would be comfortable if he died. After all, this was just a game. However, he had to protect Ray.

It may have been a game to him, but this was reality for Ray, an NPC with an artificial intelligence. Right now, the life of an NPC was depending on him.

Ian laughed. Lenox's voice rang in his ears.

'Raise your head! Everything is hard! Don't relax! It is hard! So what? Nobody cares!'

Those words. The enemy wouldn't care about his circumstances. The enemy didn't care that he wanted to close his eyes and collapse. No, they would gain strength from Ian's despair, and would try to step on him.

"Who's next?" Ian shouted.

The residents were already watching the fight through the windows and gaps in the alleys. An orc struggling against the infamous Derek. The orc shed blood, but didn't give up.

"Come! I will deal with you!"

"Impressive."

Derek nodded.

"Yes, you... you truly are Hoyt's friend. I believe it."

"Derek, will you come out?"

"The entertainment is over, Young Man."

"What do you mean?"

"I enjoyed it, but now it is time to work."



Derek gestured with his chin. Then his subordinate, hovering behind Ian, grabbed Ray. Ray struggled desperately, but he couldn't resist the strength of an adult. Ian tried to rush over, but Derek approached and punched Ian in the abdomen.

"Cough...!"

Derek was strong. It was a blow that made his head go blank.

Ian sat down. Derek spoke in a laughing tone from above him.

"The time is coming soon."

Derek grabbed Ian's hair. Then someone caught Ian's attention.

An orc was running over. One eye, and a scary face laced with scars and covered in tattoos. It was Hoyt.

## CHAPTER 16

### ABOUT LIFE (3)

---

“Hoyt, the honorable warrior Hoyt.”

Derek laughed. “I’m glad that you came.”

“Let go of them.”

“Let’s see...”

Ray was brought to Derek’s side. He circled around Ian and Ray as he asked, “Hoyt, what is your relationship with this young orc?”

“He is a colleague helping me out.”

“Is he also an orc warrior?”

“An apprentice, but I guarantee that one day he will become a warrior.”

Derek nodded. “Orc warriors are extraordinary... I haven’t met many orc warriors, but they all have one thing in common.”

Derek kicked Ian.

“Ugh!”

“They all have a logic that I can’t understand.”

He unleashed a barrage of attacks on Ian, who was collapsed on the ground. The shock caused by the feet hitting Ian’s wounds caused more blood to pour out. Ian’s body was so weak that he couldn’t get up anymore.

“You are protecting the Thompson family.” Derek touched Ian’s head with his toes. “This orc also risked his life fighting for that trivial reason.”

“Kuuack...”

“I will be honest.”

Derek held a knife to Ray’s neck, who was captured by his men. “The money that Thompson borrowed, it is nothing to me.”

“Derek!”

“But I had a lot of fun after you guys barged in. An honorable warrior, that is interesting.”

“If you hurt the both of them, then I will keep my honor and make you pay the price,” growled Hoyt.

“Calm down, I haven’t done anything yet. I don’t want to do anything.”

Derek’s subordinate grabbed Ray’s hair and pulled his head back. The boy’s white neck was clearly revealed under the midday sun.

“You are the one who will have to do something, Hoyt.”

“What does that mean?!”

“I always wonder the same thing when seeing people like you. What if that belief was bent? Where will you go?”

The blade passed lightly over Ray’s neck, leaving a thin red line in its path. Blood flowed downwards.

“Kneel down, Hoyt.”

“Derek...!”

“If you don’t fall to your knees, then this child will die.”

Ray trembled. Ian tried to stand up, but a subordinate nearby stepped on his back. Ian moaned and collapsed back onto the ground.

“Come, kneel down Hoyt. Bow your honor.”

Derek said with a chuckle.

Ian formed a tight fist where he was laying on the ground, his head brimming with fury. Hoyt wasn't an orc who could be insulted by a loan shark. A man who made slaves of others or sold them to brothels for money couldn't sneer at Hoyt.

He was a warrior who knew honor, and had proven himself. Derek absolutely couldn't mock Hoyt.

[The Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon) has been used.]

[You are an orc who doesn't know how to give up.]

[Your fighting spirit has raised the limits of your body.]

Ian shook his head. Hoyt was about to bend his knees. His eyes were calm, but Ian's eyes shook fiercely as he looked at Hoyt. A hot emotion was boiling up in his body.

[Your willpower has soared.]

[Warrior's Fighting Spirit (Uncommon) is extremely fierce.]

[Warrior's Fighting Spirit has temporarily changed to Indomitable Will (Special).]

[Indomitable Will (Special) has temporarily changed to Indomitable Fighting Spirit (Rare).]

[Your body has gone beyond its limits.]

His status window flashed. Derek's voice was heard.

"Kneel and place your forehead against the ground."

He was smiling.

“There should be a banging sound. Then I’ll safely return them.”

Ian’s hand moved. He grabbed Derek’s ankle.

[Your assimilation rate has risen. It is now 57%.]

[Assimilation: 58%]

[Assimilation: 59%]

.....

Assimilation: 65%]

[Assimilation: 66%]

.....

[Your assimilation rate has risen. It is now...]

Ian pulled at Derek’s ankle. Derek stumbled at the sudden power. Ian stood up using all his might. The subordinate with his leg on Ian’s back fell down. All the strength in Ian’s body exploded as he aimed his left fist at Derek.

Derek avoided it and aimed his knife at Ian. Ian leaned back. His body was light. He avoided Derek’s knife. Every wound on Ian’s body was screaming. The pain cleared Ian’s spirit of any distractions. He desperately burned his power as he aimed at Derek’s torso.

“This last-ditch struggle...!”

Derek growled out as he stabbed Ian with his knife. The knife was stuck in Ian’s side. His knees tried to buckle, but he gave strength to his legs and persisted. He gritted his teeth and moved.

His goal wasn’t Derek. Ian aimed at the face of the man holding Ray. Ian’s fists flew at

his face. A strike with all the power in his body! The opponent's body flew through the air.

Ian caught Ray's body. He could feel a weapon aiming towards his back. Ian didn't care and threw Ray towards Hoyt.

"Run————!"

Ray flew through the air and rolled across the floor. He got up and ran towards Hoyt. Ray burrowed himself into Hoyt's arms.

Ian laughed at the sight. It was up to here. He had done what was needed.

Then Derek kicked him onto the ground. Ian was trampled on many times by Derek and his men... Derek's attack contained a lot of anger, so it felt like Ian's breath stopped every time. Ian's vomited up blood. Derek didn't care and kicked Ian's head.

Ian rolled across the ground. Derek stopped the beating and breathed out.

"Hoo, hoo..."

Ian grinned with his messed up face and asked, "How is it... Derek...?"

"I looked down on you. I apologize for that, but nothing has changed." Derek smiled like he was suppressing his anger and turned towards Hoyt. "It is because my proposal is still valid."

"....."

"Hoyt, kneel. Otherwise, I will kill this orc cruelly. I am very angry right now so my patience has fallen. Do it right now."

Derek raised his knife. "I said to bow down."

Ian burst out laughing.

"Kulkulkul, kulkul, kuku, kulkulkul...! Kulkul, ku, kulkul!"

"What is so funny?"

Ian cried out, "Hoyt... Now... you don't have to listen to this coward."

"Do you want to die?"

"Derek, I won't die even if I die."

"What does that mean?"

"Literally."

Ian spat out blood and said.

"I received the curse of the stars."

".....!"

"Even if I die, I will revive. I absolutely won't let Derek insult Hoyt. Kulkulkul."

Derek glanced at Hoyt. "Is that true, Hoyt?"

"....."

"The curse of the stars... So you're not afraid of death."

Derek nodded.

"I will know once I kill you."

He raised his knife. Ian smiled and closed his eyes. This was his first death in Elder Lord, but he wouldn't feel afraid if he could preserve the honor of a respectable warrior. Rather, he would gladly die.

Just as Derek's blade was about to fall, Hoyt's voice was heard.

"Derek, stop."

Ian opened his eyes.

"What is it?"

“I will accept.”

“Hoh.”

Ian turned his head and screamed.

“Hoyt, what...?”

Hoyt didn’t look at Ian. His eyes were firm like there was nothing more to be said.

“Hoyt...!”

Ian’s face distorted. Despite his desperate look, Hoyt’s knees started to slowly fold.



Hoyt raised a fist. Then he saw Ian’s messed up face and put his fist down. He slapped Ian’s face instead.

*Jjak!*

“Kuock...”

“I’m disappointed in you.”

Ian couldn’t accept it. “I did what I wanted.”

“Suicide?”

“Hoyt, I received the curse of the stars!”

“I know.”

“I’m not afraid of death...”

The fist came flying this time. Ian collapsed on the floor.

“Kuock...”

“Keep this in mind.”



Hoyt grabbed Ian's neck and lifted him. A tremendous power could be felt. The terrible face of the one-eyed Hoyt pushed closed to him.

"An orc who isn't afraid of death can't become a warrior."

"....."

"Remember, young orc. Death can never beat life. The one who survives is strong."

"But..."

"Do you know why the orcs are always asking if you are alive?"

"....."

"Honor, freedom, struggle- they are only possible if you are alive. Enduring a little humiliation is nothing in order to live."

Ian bowed his head. Elder Lord was a game to him, but Hoyt was a resident of Elder Lord. For him, life and death here was reality. Hoyt's hands were trembling as they grabbed Ian's neck.

"In front of survival, falling to my knees is nothing."

"...I'm really sorry."

"Think about what real honor is. It is true that pride isn't real honor."

"I understand."

"No matter what, we have to survive."

Ian nodded.

Hoyt's true heart was revealed.

The sunset caused the sky to look as if it were on fire. Ian carefully engraved Hoyt's harsh face, that received the glow, into his head. Hoyt's wild breathing, his careful eyes, and his voice that was discussing life made its way into Ian, making it impossible to tell if this world was a game or if it was reality.

The sky in Elder Lord was no different from the sky in reality.

Hoyt said, "Thank you."

".....!"

"I said this before, but I might think the same way if I were you." Hoyt smiled quietly.

"No..." Ian laughed despite the pressure on this throat. It was like the cliched plots that he disliked. "By the way, how were my abilities? Derek was surprised."

"Kulkulkul. Nice. You should have seen his face."

The two orcs burst out laughing.

They talked for a while. Hoyt smiled before calming himself and asked with a solemn expression, "I wanted to tell you one final thing. Death doesn't avoid you because you have been cursed by the stars. Rather, you must survive longer than others."

"What do you mean?"

"You have to build up achievements in order to receive God's forgiveness, but death will cause those achievements to drop. If you don't receive forgiveness, then you will face a more severe pain and destruction than death. Those who are cursed by God, who keep dying without any fear of death, are eventually drawn into the Abyss and punished for eternity. That can happen to you."

Ian listened. He could see how the NPCs perceived the curse of the stars. If the story was real, then it really was a terrible curse.

"There is a reason why the curse of the stars is called a curse."

"I will keep that in mind."

"I will pray for you to escape the confines of it."

A delicious smell was coming from inside Thompson's house.

Thompson's wife, who had been informed of the encounter with Derek, cried with tears of gratefulness and regret. Ian and Hoyt desperately tried to calm her down. She

was probably cooking for them.

“I’m looking forward to the meal.”

“Yes.”

Ian and Hoyt turned towards the house. It was at that moment that a long shadow covered Ian and Hoyt. It was the shape of a person.

Ian and Hoyt looked back at the same time. A man stood there. The owner of the shadow opened his mouth.

“What stupid orcs are standing in front of my house?”

Hoyt’s eyes widened. The man standing there was wearing old and dirty clothes. The man laughed.

“Hoyt, I’m back.”

“Thompson!”

Thompson had returned.

# CHAPTER 17

## WARRIOR'S QUALIFICATIONS (1)

---

Thompson walked towards Hoyt. One of his legs was limping, and one could easily guess what his journey had been like through his ragged clothing.

"Your face is still fearsome."

"You are still skinny like a dried anchovy."

The two people looked at each other, numerous emotions flashing across their faces. Hoyt extended his fist.

"You are alive."

"...Yes."

Thompson looked at Hoyt's fist for a moment. His mouth twitched as he smiled and wiped at his face with his sleeves. His face twisted up in an unknown emotion. Thompson shook his head. His shoulders trembled.

"I'm a... live."

Thompson lifted his fist. A human fist was small compared to an orc's. The two fists touched. Tears flowed from Thompson's eyes. He tried to hold back his cries as he wrapped both hands around Hoyt's fist.

"Your family is well."

"Thank you. Thank you, Hoyt..."

"The crybaby has returned."

"You... you really..."

Thompson embraced Hoyt.

"I am sorry. And thank you..."

“We are friends.”

“Friends. Yes, my dear friend...”

The sunset spread above the heads of the human and orc hugging each other. Thompson cried for a while.

The door of the house opened and a little boy stuck out his head. He discovered the figure of the man. The boy rubbed his eyes with doubt before running towards the man, crying aloud. The rest of the family inside the house came out and discovered Thompson’s return. They rushed over to him in excitement.

Ian nodded as he looked on from a distance. The two orcs and the human family had a warm dinner together.



Derek leaned back in his chair.

He had built a great fortune in the free city of Anail and reigned like a king in the underworld. Even the mayor of Anail couldn’t face him head-on.

The man who entered Derek’s room was trembling because he knew this fact.

“100 gold...”

“I will definitely pay you back.”

“What about the collateral?”

“If I sell my house...”

Derek picked up his dagger. The man jumped.

Derek lowered the dagger and pierced a cockroach crawling on his desk. Copious amounts of blood and body fluids emerged from the twitching body until it fell silent. Derek pulled out his dagger, the fragmented body of the cockroach sliding off of it.

“The value of your house is a little lacking.”

“I will pay it all back, even if I have to dedicate my life...”

“You are also not enough.”

“T-Then...?”

“Your family.”

Derek supported his chin on his folded hands.

“Once the deadline passes, the interest will double. If you can’t pay the price, then I will take away some family members.”

“That...”

“Didn’t you say that you would pay it back? Are you trying to cheat me?”

“I’m not!”

“Then the story is easy. You don’t need to worry about what will happen since you will pay it all back. Isn’t that right?”

“.....”

“I want you to solve the problem and pay me back. It is my sincere wish that our business with each other turns out well.”

Derek rang the notification bell on his desk. The door opened and a subordinate entered. He placed a pile of paperwork on the desk.

“Now, read this. It is as we promised. Sign it.”

“I’m thinking...”

“This won’t be available later, it is now or never.”

“Ohhh...”

“Sign it right now.”

The man dropped his head. He scanned the documents. The contents were simple. Derek's money would be borrowed, the interest rate was stated, and the collateral set up. The collateral included his house, himself, and even his family.

The man hesitated and Derek stretched out his hand for the documents. The man grabbed the papers, his eyes ablaze in fury. He gritted his teeth and signed his name and handed the documents over to Derek. Derek nodded.

Derek and the man had now become the creditor and debtor.

"Then I wish you luck."

"....."

The man accepted a duplicate copy of the paperwork. The handwriting on both copies lit up. The man held it in his trembling hands and walked out of Derek's room. Derek looked at his back and started thinking.

The reason why Derek was able to accumulate wealth in Anail was simple.

He created and executed a contract. That was all. He followed the agreement he signed with other people, regardless of his emotions. While others were emotionally distracted, Derek just followed the contents of the contract. He carried out the contract. If the other person broke it, then he would kill them and execute the rest of the contract.

"Senior."

"What is going on?"

"Thompson has fulfilled his agreement."

Derek's eyes widened.

"Hoh."

"He has also paid all the added interest."

"Interesting."

“There was an accident, but he received a lucky chance because to that.”

The subordinate watched Derek, who nodded. “Continue.”

“Yes. On the way back, he encountered monsters attacking a group of dwarves and most of his upper ranked personnel were injured helping them. Due to this, he returned late. However, it turned out that the dwarves were blacksmiths of the Golden Anvil.”

“How dramatic.”

The Golden Anvil was a tribe with the best workmanship among the dexterous dwarves. They didn’t give away their things easily. They were stubborn craftsman who only conveyed goods to those they had a relationship with.

“Thanks to that, he made a deal with the Golden Anvil, and will earn large amounts of money in the future.”

“What a funny story.”

Derek laughed.

“Benevolent Thompson, stupid Thompson. He was betrayed because of that trust, and due to this kindness in helping out the dwarves, his family was almost ruined.”

If it weren’t for Hoyt, his family would’ve been destroyed while he was busy with the dwarves.

“However, thanks to that nature, Thompson helped both his family and the dwarves. In the end, didn’t Thompson’s kindness improve his quality of life?”

“It might be the case now, but we don’t know what will happen later.”

“That’s right, I don’t know. Huhuhu.”

His subordinate removed the cockroach from his desk, cleaned the knife and asked. “So, releasing Thompson... will we do that?”

Derek nodded. “The contract must be respected.”



“Yes, then I will tell him.”

“Good work.”

“It is nothing.”

His subordinate left.

Derek recalled what happened yesterday.

Derek had met a lot of people in his life, and had come to a conclusion. People were all the same. They acted like they were different, but in the end, they were just greedy and selfish beings. These were variables that Derek could gauge.

Despite all of this, Derek couldn't understand Hoyt and the warriors. Derek was interested for the first time.

He wanted to see if their beliefs would bend. Would they have the same reaction as other humans? Would they be the same as the others, or remain a warrior to the end? If so, what would they pay to keep that honor?

Yesterday, he had seen Hoyt on his knees. But Derek didn't feel what he had expected. Rather, it had become more obscure.

There was a young orc with Hoyt.

“The curse of the stars...”

There were a few cursed people on the continent. However, the number of those who were cursed by the stars kept increasing.

Not long ago, a person cursed by the stars did a great job and his name became widely known, and the nobleman who sponsored him gained tremendous profits. Since then, other nobles and large figures started to pay attention to those who had been cursed by the stars.

The young orc said he was cursed by the stars.

Derek had a good feeling. He had felt one thing from the orc.

A will that wouldn't break. An indomitable fighting spirit. Those with such spirits would eventually come to two ends:

An early death or-

"A flourishing life."

Derek muttered.

The young orc would break early or become great.

Derek was convinced. They were people he couldn't understand. He had dug into the rice paddy, and what he found wasn't the shabby grain that he had initially expected. Rather, Derek himself might be swallowed by the Abyss.

If that was the case...

"Investment..."

Derek had never taken risks—he always made sure that there was a guarantee that benefited him. In no time, life had become boring, and he also got older. Now there was nothing unexpected in his life. The man who borrowed money earlier would run away, knowing that his house and family would end up in Derek's hands. The recovered amount would be 15% of the principal investment.

"I don't understand."

For the first time in his life, he was gripped with the desire to take a risk and make a bet.

"Life is never known..."



"I'd like this."

"Isn't it too big?"

"An orc should swing this type of sword."

Hoyt and Ian brainstormed together as they looked over something on a piece of paper. It was a drawing of a weapon.

In order to repay Hoyt and Ian, Thompson had offered to make them weapons.

There weren't many merchants who could deal with the Golden Anvil blacksmiths, so few warriors used their weapons. Ian and Hoyt had the opportunity to obtain Golden Anvil weapons, thanks to Thompson.

Hoyt drew a hammer that wasn't significantly different to the one he used in the past, but Ian thought of a huge greatsword that was much bigger compared to his previous one. Hoyt thought it was too big to be a sword.

"Are you really planning on this?"

"Yes, I can feel it."

A giant bayonet. At Orcrox Fortress' Hall of Fame, the greatsword that 'Master of the Greatsword' Leyteno was holding was also this big.

"Then go with your gut. Kulkulkul."

Hoyt sat on the sofa and sipped his tea. It was an expensive black tea brought back by Thompson.

Thompson had succeeded in recovering his business and he was busy trading again. Every day, he rented a crystal ball from the Blacksmith Company and communicated with his former clients. Derek had backed away from Thompson. He was someone who only followed the contract. Ian didn't like this reputation either.

Ian said, "He is a villain."

"You never know when you might need him."

"....."

Derek had handed Ian a business card, saying to come find him if Ian ever needed help.

'I will never approach a villain like him.'

Ian had cursed at the man who brought him the business card, but he, Derek's direct subordinate, just smiled in return.

"I'll never ask for his help."

"You don't know what will happen in the future." Hoyt just smiled.

Ian asked, "What will you do next?"

"Thompson is back and the business with Derek is resolved, so I will go traveling again."

"Then, you're leaving the city soon?"

The time that he spent with Hoyt had flown by. It was hard to believe that it was almost time for them to separate.

"I plan to stay at Orcrox Fortress for a bit, so don't worry too much."

"Ohh..."

"I have something to tell Instructor Lenox."

Even Hoyt had learned from Lenox, so just how old was Lenox? In addition, how strong was Lenox, to be able to maintain such spirit, despite the long passage of time? Ian felt admiration towards Lenox.

Ian then once again became immersed in the drawing of his weapon.

Suddenly, he received a whisper. It was from Grom.

[Grom: Ian... Are you doing well...?]

As soon as he read the message, Grom's sullen expression appeared in his head.

[Ian: Yes, I'm fine. How about you, Grom?]

Grom replied,

[Grom: I...]

[Grom: Well...]

[Grom: Help me...]

[Grom: I'm scared... ㄗ ㄗ]

Ian heard that Grom had been hunting for goblins.

[Ian: Are the goblins that scary?]

[Grom:... Nope... Not the goblins...]

Grom replied.

[Grom: The orc warriors... ㄗ ㄗ]

While Ian and Hoyt were watching the Thompson family, enjoying their leisure time, and envisioning their new weapons from the Golden Anvil craftsmen, Grom was pitifully rolling among the harsh orc warriors.

# CHAPTER 18

## WARRIOR'S QUALIFICATIONS (2)

---

A goblin stood in front of Grom. It had a small body, and a grumpy face that displayed an angry expression as it threw a stone at Grom.

"Ouch!"

The rock hit his shin and Grom jumped, grabbing his leg in pain. The goblin started throwing stones even harder.

"This bastard!"

Grom raised his axe and ran towards the goblin. The goblin rushed away quickly. In the meantime, he kept throwing dirt and rocks back at Grom.

"Wait there!"

The goblin hid behind some thick bushes. Grom jumped over the bushes.

"Got you...!"

As Grom landed on the ground, goblins surrounded him.

"Kyahahak! Kyak!"

"Kyah! Kyak!"

The goblins no longer held rocks. They held things like blunt axes, rusty swords, spears, and other weapons that seemed to have been stolen.

The goblin who lured Grom into the crowd shot a nasty smile at him and threw a rock again. Grom was hit in the head and fell over. Detestable. Really detestable. He wanted to rush over and give it a good thrashing, but he was outnumbered. It was a group of goblins with over a dozen people.

Grom fell back.

*Thud, thud.*

Someone touched Grom's back. He turned around to see a goblin holding a handaxe. He laughed. His rear was also dominated by goblins.

Grom laughed awkwardly, "... Kulkul."

Grom was now able to laugh like an orc. However, he looked a bit subservient.

The goblin raised his axe and started a slicing motion towards Grom's neck. His head would be cut off now if he didn't run away. As the goblin smiled mockingly, Grom felt a sense of déjà vu.

Something boiled up inside him. He was angry. It was really detestable. Yes, this emotion, it was like when someone told him off for being too loud in an Internet cafe. It felt like that time, when he hit the reset button and ran away.

Grom's axe flashed.

"Keeeeeek!"

The goblin's head was split apart.

"These kids————!"

The goblins were astonished and simultaneously rushed towards Grom. Grom wielded his axe. There were goblins everywhere. He spun the axe around and around in order to survive. The goblins didn't dare approach the wildly spinning axe and retreated.

It was his last hurrah, but it worked!

Grom shouted as old memories flashed through his head.

"Whirlwind————!"

Then messages popped up.

[Congratulations!]

[You struggled to survive and have learned an hidden axe technique!]

[You are like a terrible trolley car that spins round and round, destroying everything around you in its wake, no matter what!]

[This is an attack that enemies can't deal with!]

[All enemies will be unconditionally killed!]

[A terrible massacre, a feast of blood is anticipated!]

[The wild attack that will decimate everything!]

Oh my god! Grom's expression brightened.

It was clear. A hidden piece. This was a hidden piece of Elder Lord, a hidden skill!

[Overwhelming Assault (Common) has been acquired!]

Grom wobbled.

The name was cool, but it was just an ordinary Common grade skill. As soon as he lost balance, the goblins charged towards Grom.

"Keook!"

He rolled and avoided their attacks, but his skull was soon smashed by a goblin's stone hammer. His head started spinning. He could see goblins raising their weapons out of the corner of his eye.

This would be his first death since becoming an orc. Grom closed his eyes.



At that moment, the earth started to shake.

The goblins flinched. A thunderous sound hit their ears.

“Bul————!”

“Tarrrrrrrrr————!”

Grom opened his eyes. 10 orc warriors came rushing like crazy. Their broad shoulders made it seem like they numbered in the dozens, or in the hundreds. They were like a runaway train as they swept through the goblins. The goblins’ bodies flew through the air.

“Kyaaaaak!”

“Kyak!”

“Kieeeeek!”

The goblins started screaming and crying. With one assault, dozens of goblins were torn into rags.

“Keooooook!”

Grom shrieked.

The orc warriors didn’t care as Grom fell down.

[You are in critical condition!]

“.....”

Grom slumped down.

The fight was over in a flash. The goblins were twitching on the ground. The orc warriors killed those goblins without mercy.

“Apprentice! Where are you? Are you alive?”

“Euh...”

Grom got up. The faces of the warriors were visible. All of them looked fearsome. Their faces and bodies were full of tattoos, and they were covered with blood. They had relaxed gestures and an imposing walk!

The real warriors recognized by Lenox! The warriors who found Grom laughed out loud, “Kulkulkulkul! You’re alive, Apprentice! Wonderful!”

“You lured the goblins very well! Great talent!”

“Pushovers who see other pushovers would want to catch them!”

“The goblins truly have discerning eyes! They judged perfectly! They are perfect at judging pushovers! Kuhahahah!”

That’s right. Grom had been acting as the pushover, or bait, all day.

The goblins were very wary of orcs, but once they saw Grom, they would provoke him and pull him into a large crowd. Then the orc warriors would rush in to slaughter the group.

As the bait, Grom had suffered and almost died many times. The goblins were too much, and he could barely resist for a minute every time. Then, once Grom was surrounded, the orc warriors would charge in and sweep up the goblins.

This had happened several times already. The goblins would wither away due to the orc warriors from Orcrox Fortress.

The warriors urged Grom to hurry.

“Then, I’ll ask you to prepare new goblins again, Apprentice!”

Grom shook his head.

“Warriors, I think it will be hard now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Goblins are also intelligent monsters! At this point, they might’ve noticed your strategy.”

“Hrmm.”

“Besides, I have grown in the battles. I am different from before, I have become stronger. The goblins won’t be able to easily mess with me. They have eyes!”

That’s right. Grom had fought with the warriors. Although he almost died several times, he was able to accumulate skill proficiency and achievement points. Furthermore, he had gained the Overwhelming Assault (Common) skill. The goblins wouldn’t be able to defeat Grom, who was more powerful.

“That makes sense.”

“Yes! That’s right.”

“But we don’t know if we don’t try one more time.”

“I understand. However, it is a waste of time.”

Grom walked through the forest with the warriors behind him. He was different from before. He puffed out his chest and showed the attitude of a warrior. Now, Grom was a warrior who stood among the orcs! He was still an apprentice, but the goblins couldn’t come near him...

“Keek! Keek!”

A goblin appeared before his thought finished!

“Keek! Keeek!”

Grom felt resigned. The two goblins circled around Grom. They exchanged glances. Grom was able to guess their meaning.

Pushover! A pushover!

Resignation became anger. Grom cried out as anger rose in his body. His temper blazed fiercely towards the goblins.

“These guys————!”

It was the skill Overwhelming Assault!

“Kyakak, kyaack?”

“Kek? Keehek?”

Why did a pushover suddenly become like this? Let’s see? Was it money?

The goblins stepped back with surprise. Dozens of suddenly goblins emerged from the rocks! But Grom, who had become crazy, charged towards them without stopping his assault. He was like a runaway train!

“Buuuuuuuul———— taaaaaaaar————!”



*–Then this corner!*

*–A video is the topic! Video of a video! A distilled version is given!*

*–It is like red ginseng extract!*

*–Oh, Jaehan-ssi. Don’t you think red ginseng is too much?*

*–Hahaha. I’m sorry. I don’t know because I have been taking red ginseng medicine lately.*

*–Distilled? Ohoho, who told you that it was good for you?*

*–It is a secret. Ahahahaha. (TL Note: red ginseng can be taken as an aphrodisiac and used to help with male erectile dysfunction)*

“They are playing around.”

Yiyu shook her head.

“The atmosphere around the two of them is what wins viewers.”

“What are they going to discuss?”

Yiyu was at Café Reason with her friend, Yoon Bora. They were meeting for a group assignment. But as always, various accidents and illnesses occurred, meaning that only the two of them attended. The two of them quickly quit the task.

They watched as the two hosts of [Elder Road Times], Yoojung and Jaehan, introduced the topic.

*–The fourth video is a comedy in Elder Lord and will make your stomach hurt just watching it! It is a behind the scenes video of the militia leader, Kim Dalkwang.*

*–Isn't another name for Kim Dalkwang 'Capitalist Monster', a monster born from capitalism?*

*–Yes! He boasts exceptional role-playing skills. Of course, he isn't just funny but also has great abilities. Now, then please watch!*

The door of Café Reason opened. It was Ian. He entered and discovered that Yiyu was here.

“You came?”

“Yes, Oppa.”

“Oppa, hello!”

Ian smiled at Yoon Bora's greeting.

“Hello. Bora-ssi right?”

“Yes, you remembered. It's been a while.”

“That's right. You must be busy. You should come here more often.”

“Yes!”

Yiyu elbowed Yoon Bora.

“Why, what is it?”

“Look at this.”

Ian also eyed the tablet. He was now an Elder Lord player. It was necessary to know the hot topics.

*–Hahahaha. That is really funny.*

*–Yes. Kukuk. My belly button has fallen off. Jaehan-ssi, please find my belly button. It is gone.*

*–Hahaha. Belly button?*

*–Yes, belly button. Find it!*

*I'll find it after the recording. Please believe in me.*

*–Oh, impressive!*

“Hu...”

Ian shook his head.

*–I'm sorry. Hahaha! This time, Youvidser Laney filmed a video that is very hot!*

*-Orc users, wake up! The force of an orc warrior! Let's feel it altogether!*

Ian focused on the orc. What orc had done a wonderful job of spreading the taste of orcs to the ignorant humans?

“.....”

However, the scene was familiar. An orc quickly slaughtered three users. The face that looked into the air as he held his weapon was familiar. That was obviously...

*-Today, I met three wicked people and killed them, implementing justice.*

“Cough...”

*-Where are the people who know honor?*

“C-Cough! Cough!”

“Oppa, what is it?”

“No, that, cough! Cough!”

“Did you swallow something the wrong way?”

He had choked with dismay. Yiyu gave some water to Ian. Ian sipped the water while calming his surprise. Ian was confused by the complicated emotions he felt as he listened to Yiyu and Yoon Bora talk about how cool and manly the orc was.

‘Who filmed that?’

At that moment, the notification bell rang as the door to Café Reason opened.

A woman entered.

She was a considerable beauty. She walked in gracefully with expensive clothes that seemed to shine. Her hair was wavy, as if it was copper wire, and each sweep of her head was a seductive gesture that made the people who saw it tremble.

Had a real celebrity appeared for a photo shoot? People who looked like bodyguards waited outside the door. No, they were bodyguards.

“Pretty...” Yiyu admired.

The woman headed to the counter.

“Yes, what would you like to order?” The part time worker, Han Yeori, asked.

“The boss, is he here?”

“Eh? The boss?”

“Yes, Jung Ian-ssi.”

“That... Boss, over there...”

Han Yeori pointed to Ian. The woman turned slowly. She smiled as she found Ian. That face was familiar.

On the other side, Ian recalled the name of the woman who cried out to him.

“Ji Hayeon-ssi?”

The beautiful woman, Ji Hayeon, grinned. It was a bright smile, like a flower blooming in the spring. She walked over and held out a hand to Ian.

“It’s been a while.”

“I didn’t know you would come find me like this.”

“I thought I should go see my saviour.”

Ian and Ji Hayeon shook hands.

“Raven, no, is it Jung Ian-ssi?”

Ian smiled at the old name that reminded him of the past. “Just call me Ian-ssi.”

“Yes, I will. No. I actually know a little bit about Ian-ssi. Ah, don’t worry. I found out after that incident.”

That incident. Ian smiled wryly. “Yes.”

She said, “Jung Ian-ssi is a little older than me.”

Ian cocked his head. “Indeed.”

“So it makes sense.” Ji Hayeon smiled brightly again. “Is it okay if I call you Oppa?”

On Yiyu’s side, there was a frozen silence.

In this short meeting, Ian smiled again for a third time.



# CHAPTER 19

## WARRIOR'S QUALIFICATIONS (3)

---

Lenox looked at the two orcs in front of him.

"Now you look better."

Ian laughed. He met Hoyt, learned what being an orc warrior meant, and grew as he fought against Derek. Grom also straightened his shoulders. He had defeated the goblins along with 10 orc warriors. He experienced what a true warrior's battle was. He wasn't the old Grom any longer.

Lenox asked, "Are you satisfied?"

Ian and Grom both shook their heads.

"I'm not satisfied!"

"I'm not satisfied!"

Lenox nodded.

"Yes. Don't be satisfied."

It had been a while, but Lenox hadn't changed. When Ian returned to Orcrox Fortress, the first thing he saw was Lenox grabbing the neck of an orc and lifting him.

"You are tired! You fell! You are now dead! If you were in the battlefield, then your neck would be pierced right now! Your urine would be soaking the ground!"

"I would kill myself before being shamed like that!"

The orc really freaked out as Lenox raised his axe. Looking at that sight, Ian had felt like he had returned home for some reason.

"There's something you need to know before becoming a warrior.

Lenox touched his chin. He seemed to be troubled. It was the first time they had seen

him hesitate.

“It might be a little bit...”

Ian and Grom gulped.

What would make Instructor Lenox hesitate? Lenox eventually nodded.

“I’m going to believe in you.”

Belief. It was Lenox, not anyone else, who said that he believed in them. His chest became hot, a serious expression appearing on Ian’s face.

Lenox turned around. Ian and Grom followed him. They entered the Hall of Fame.

The sound of their footsteps echoed off the stone walls. They passed by the statues of the great warriors. The torch lit up a dark tunnel. At the end of the tunnel was a large stone room.

A single monument stood there. It was large enough that they had to look up to see the head. An ancient orc was carved on the monument. Ian couldn’t understand what it meant. Lenox stared at it for a while. The torch scattered dark shadows over his face.

“Honor.”

Lenox whispered. His voice rang through the stone chamber.

“The laws of a warrior.”

“Proof.”

It was an unknown story. Lenox read the ancient orc words carved into the monument. His gaze moved from the beginning to the end of the monument.

Lenox turned around. His face was more solemn than they had ever seen it.

Then he said, “I don’t like long explanations.”

“Yes.”

“Listen carefully.”

Lenox closed his eyes opened his mouth. Lenox’s voice was softer than ever, but it sounded more vivid than Ian had ever heard it. It imprinted on him like a dream in an unforgettable manner.

“...God, please acknowledge me.”

Ian never heard orcs talking about the gods. Now Lenox was whispering to God for the first time.

“...Let us always hope that our honor won’t be lonely.”

“...Let our weapons never decay.”

“Listen to our oath, for we have established seven laws for you and the warrior descendants.”

“God.”

“.....”

“I.”

Lenox’s voice stopped. He opened his eyes. An intense light shone towards Ian and Grom. It felt like they couldn’t breathe, and that their bodies were paralyzed. Then Lenox’s voice rang not in their ears, but in their heads and in their spirits.

“I.”

“I am an orc, a warrior.”

“A warrior doesn’t forsake faith.”

“A warrior doesn’t persecute the weak.”

“A warrior doesn’t attack unarmed people.”

“A warrior doesn’t yield to injustice.”

“A warrior doesn’t shame the gods.”

“A warrior pays back any favors or vengeance.”

“A warrior protects the powerless.”

“I swear to the gods, I will abide by these laws as a warrior.”

Lenox lifted his axe. He looked up at it like it was a sacred object of trust and concluded his oath.

“Prove your honor.”

His voice stopped. Ian and Grom looked at Lenox blankly.

Lenox smiled. He wielded his axe. The blow was invisible, like a gust of air.

“.....!”

Ian and Grom’s chests were torn apart. They couldn’t even recognize the attack, let alone react to it.

Blood flowed down. The skin he cut burned like it was on fire. The wound would become a scar. It would never go away.

Lenox laughed quietly.

“It means to remember this clearly.”



Ian and Grom sat facing each other in a pub.

They each had their own income from their respective missions. Ian received the quest reward from Stella, as well as from Thompson. In the case of Grom, he picked up the goblins’ equipment and sold them to the blacksmith.

The orc’s beer, which was as strong as poison, entered their mouths.

“It’s good to drink this.”

“Kuoh...”

Grom just drank quietly. He wasn't usually like this.

“What happened?”

“Nothing, just...”

Grom chewed on the jerky.

“I'm absent-minded because of what happened. Orcs are more than what I thought them to be... what the hell... They seem to have depth.”

Ian nodded.

The laws of a warrior It was tough to imagine as he thought about the rough orcs. Rather, it resembled the chivalry of medieval knights. Even Lenox's attitude was solemn as he recited the pledge. Ian could still hear that voice in his ears.

Ian smiled and said, “Don't you think that orcs are great?”

Grom shrugged.

“Well, I experienced things I never would've done if I had picked a different species. It's hard.”

“That doesn't sound positive.”

“In fact, I didn't start as an orc because I really wanted to be one...”

Grom hesitated. Ian nodded.

“It's possible. But if you work hard, then you will succeed someday. I might've been quiet if it weren't for you, Grom.”

“Hahaha. I don't think so.”

“Don't be sad and let's try it out...”

“Sad...”

Grom repeated his words.

Then he drank a lot of alcohol. Ian also drank from his cup. The two of them gulped down copious amounts of beer.

“Kuoh...!”

“Okay!”

Another orc sat down at their circular table, placing himself between Grom and Ian. Grom knew this face.

“Warrior?”

“You’re alive! My name is Gulda. Apprentice! Kuhahal!”

He bumped shoulders with Grom. It was one of the 10 warriors who defeated with goblins with Grom, the warrior Gulda.

Gulda looked at Ian.

“Are you also an apprentice?”

“Yes.”

“Kulkukul! I see. I can’t help thinking of my own apprenticeship when I see you.”

“Did Gulda learn from Lenox?”

“Of course!”

“Were you scared then?”

“Of course! Anyone would be scared of Lenox! Kuhahal!”

They laughed at the same time.

“But keep this in mind apprentices! Instructor Lenox is a scary mentor, but he is also a great warrior! You should be honored to receive his teachings!”

He stood up and shouted as he raised his beer glass.

“For the great warrior, Lenox! Bul’tar————!”

All the orcs drinking in the pub shouted after him.

“Bul’tarr————!”

“Bul’tar————!”

The orcs downed their cups in one shot.

An orc at the beer tap noticed the atmosphere and drank once again. Ian and Grom were swept away by the ambience and drank their beers a few times. The orcs started to sing. Even though the lyrics were odd, Ian and Grom clumsily sang along.

“We are orcs! The mighty orcs! You’ll be in trouble if you mess with us! The great warriors have appeared, make way! Humans, get lost! Elves, get lost! Dwarves, get lost! Gnomes, get lost! Pretty women? Warriors have no need for a woman. Get lost! We are great orcs, great warriors!”

The oddest song lyrics! The female orcs changed the gender as they sang along.

Gulda, who was drunk on the atmosphere, stretched out and placed an arm around both Ian and Grom.

“Kuhahahal! Now what was the mission that you received?”

In an instant, the pub became loud, forcing Ian to raise his voice.

“This is the mission that Instructor Lenox gave!”

Lenox had given them another mission after teaching them the laws of a warrior. That mission was the hardest one that they had received from Lenox.

“Work as a warrior!”

After telling them the warrior’s oath, Lenox had given them the task of returning after working as a warrior. It was up to each person to decide what to do. Ian and Grom didn’t know what to do.

“Ohhh...!”

Gulda had a complex expression on his face. Then he hit both of them on the back.

“Keuk!”

“Ouch!”

“Congratulations to you! Orc apprentices! Very fast! Kuhahahal!”

Gulda laughed loudly.

“What are you talking about?”

“This is the last gateway to becoming a warrior!”

Ian met Grom’s eyes.

“Really?!”

“Yes! You received this mission very quickly! It seems like Instructor Lenox appreciates you a lot!”

They couldn’t believe it. It was unbelievable to Ian and Grom that Lenox appreciated them, since he never praised them and always yelled at them. But Gulda seemed sure of it.

“Apprentices, here’s to becoming warriors! Kuhahahal!”

He celebrated with another shot of beer. Grom asked him, “Then, what is the work of a warrior?”

“I don’t know!”

“You don’t know?!”

“Apprentice! All warriors have their own honor! You’ll need to find your own answers!”

It was like preparing for a job interview, only to find out that it was a personality



interview after arriving. It wasn't a simple quest where they followed instructions.

Grom asked him.

"What work did Gulda do to become a warrior?"

"Me?"

Gulda's eyes became distant.

"I did a tremendous task to become a warrior!"

"Ohh! What is it?"

"I used my halberd against Lenox!"

".....!"

Ian and Grom's mouths dropped open.

"Warriors need to be strong! I challenged Lenox to prove my strength!"

"What happened?"

"I can't remember after swinging my halberd! Kuhahahal!"

"....."

"I was unconscious for a week! Since then, I can't count numbers and sometimes my hands tremble, but it's okay! Because I am a warrior!"

Ian and Grom felt more lost. The two exchanged glances.

They would forget about the mission and just enjoy the rest of the day. Yes. Ian, Grom, and Gulda. The trio swallowed their beer at the same time.

"Bul'tar!"

## CHAPTER 20

### HUMANS AND SHAMAN (1)

---

Ian followed Hoyt's advice and ventured alone out of Orcrox Fortress.

Orc warriors weren't the only types of orcs present in Orcrox Fortress, so Hoyt advised Ian to look outside to find the answer. Heeding his advice, Ian decided to explore the wider world of Elder Lord, and find out what it was like to be a warrior.

Ian headed west, since he had never been there before.

The land of the farmers was to the south of Orcrox Fortress, while the free city of Anail was to the east. The west held Basque Village, where the shamans trained. Ian decided to visit Basque Village because he wanted to see the wise shaman Tashaquil.

Ian moved without any difficulty, killing the occasional monster. Now none of the monsters around Orcrox Fortress were his opponents.

[Status Window]

'Person Pursuing the Pinnacle' Ian, Orc Apprentice Warrior

Level: 10

Achievement Points: 610

Assimilation: 63%

Abilities:

Orc's Superhuman Strength (Uncommon)

Orc's Vitality (Uncommon)

Orc's Greatsword Technique (Uncommon)

Indomitable Will (Special)

Mind's Eye (Special)

In the meantime, both his level and achievement points increased. After fighting Derek, Warrior's Fighting Spirit was upgraded to the special ranked skill, Indomitable Will. The proficiency of Orc's Greatsword Technique also increased.

[Mind's Eye has opened. Identifying the goblin.]

[Target is weak. The poor goblin is afraid of you.]

Mind's Eye showed information about the target. With it, he could grasp the target's emotions and strength, making the ability very useful. The goblin was overwhelmed by the atmosphere around Ian and abandoned his weapon. He then fell facedown in the dirt.

"Kyaak...! Kyak...!"

It was a gesture asking for forgiveness. Ian hesitated as he lifted his greatsword. He heard Lenox's solemn voice.

'A warrior doesn't attack unarmed people.'

He probably meant a situation like this. The goblin was begging Ian for mercy. If he struck the neck of the goblin, it would be a one-sided murder, not a battle. Ian didn't think that was the path of a warrior.

As Ian hesitated, the goblin kept bowing.

"Kyaak...!"

The goblin tried to provoke extreme compassion in the other person. Its gestures and eyes were pitiful. In the end, Ian lowered his greatsword.

“Um...!”

“Kyak kyak!”

“Rise.”

The goblin bowed deeper.

“Raise your head! Don’t bow down on your knees.”

“Kiek?”

“If you attack an orc again, then I won’t forgive you.”

“Kiek! Kiek!”

“Be an honorable goblin. Bul’tar!”

Ian turned around. It was a dignified rear view.

The goblin’s eyes became wet. He was a goblin, a nasty monster who attacked the other person! He was a species that was always cursed and insulted. But the orc had told him to be an honorable goblin. The goblin felt an unknown emotion.

Then the goblin rushed after Ian.

“Huh?”

“Kyak kyak!”

The goblin pulled Ian’s sleeve. Ian cocked his head. It seemed like the goblin was trying to say something. The goblin pointed to him with his fingertips, then pointed to another place and made a walking motion. It was a gesture to follow him.

[The goblin feels favorable towards you.]

Mind's Eye's gave him a positive answer. Ian nodded and followed the goblin. He didn't know what was going on, but he thought it would be interesting.

He had previously heard from Grom that goblins were really nasty monsters. They attacked or mocked their opponent, provoking them and eventually leading them towards a large group armed with weapons. However, this goblin didn't seem like that.

Ian walked along with the goblin. A little further ahead, a small group of approximately 10 goblins appeared. The goblins were sitting down and chewing on something. However, they became startled when they saw Ian.

"Kyaak?" Kyak! Kyak!"

"Keeek?"

The small goblins jumped up and grabbed their weapons. Ian raised the palm of his hands to show he wasn't an enemy, but they didn't calm down.

"Kiek!"

The goblin who led Ian to the goblins yelled at them. They seemed to talk about something, and then the weapons were put down. Ian walked into the group of goblins, who looked at him with a mixture of fear and curiosity.

Among the crowd was a bearded goblin.

"Orc. Kyak! It is nice to meet you kyak!"

Ian's eyes widened. The goblin used the official language.

"I am the elder of this group, Kyawak."

"My name is Ian."

"Ian kyak."

Kyawak stroked the head of the goblin that led Ian here. It seemed like the whole story had been described. Kyawak beckoned.

The goblins brought something to Ian. It was a huge chunk of beef.

“Thank you for showing mercy to my grandson kyak. This is a sign of our appreciation kyak. The goblins will treat you to a meal kyak!”

Ian nodded. He wouldn't reject their hearts. In fact, the meat was well cooked so he started to salivate.

“Thank you.”

Ian sat down. The moment that he was about to take a bite from the beef,

“.....”

The goblins around Ian were staring at the beef with longing eyes. Ian stopped moving. The goblins were holding tree roots and grass, like they were poor. Ian was the only one holding well cooked beef. Even Kyawak was just holding a big leaf. They looked like poor people starving due to a lack of food!

Ian put down the beef that he was about to bite into. Then he drew his greatsword. The goblins were startled by the sudden movement of the blade.

Ian's greatsword cut apart the beef, splitting it into exactly 11 pieces. It was the perfect distribution for Ian and the goblins. Ian gave it to the goblins without saying a word. The goblins accepted the beef with moist eyes. Kyawak seemed especially impressed as he shouted exuberantly.

“Kyaak...!”

“Kyak!”

Ian raised the beef. The goblins next to him also raised their meat. Ian placed the beef in his mouth and ate it all at once. The goblins also ate the beef with him. 10 goblins and one orc swallowed the beef.

*Munch!*

The goblins' eyes filled with tears as they ate the delicious beef. Ian admired how well it was cooked. It was a match for any restaurant's steak. However, one piece of beef wasn't enough for an orc. The goblins handed out some grass and Ian filled his stomach with the vegetation.

The goblins were hungry but they didn't eat that much because their bodies were small. Ian ate all of the grass that they left behind.

"Thank you for the meal."

"No kyak. We should thank you kieek. It is the first time that we've had an orc as a guest kyaak."

He shared a conversation with Kyawak.

The goblins originally dwelled to the north of Orcrox Fortress, but there was a problem and the goblins recently started to head south. Not long ago, Grom had been given a goblin subjugation mission.

The monsters in the north were rough and there were powerful mutants. Direwolves became bigger and trolls became more oppressive. Ogres also popped up and attacked other monsters indiscriminately.

"We were forced to come down here kyaak. Then it overlapped with the orc territory kyaack. So we are moving further south kyak."

The goblins were forced to go south.

"Something scary has obviously appeared in the north kyaak. The orcs should pay attention kieek!"

"Hmm..."

The mutant werewolf popped into his head. The wolves had also come down from the north. Was there really something unusual happening in the north? The moment that Ian was about to ask Kyawak something...

There was a sound.

*Swaeeeeek.*

Ian reflexively lifted his greatsword and covered Kyawak.

*Chaeng!*

An arrow hit Ian's sword and fell down.

"Kyaak?"

The goblins stared blankly. Then they raised their weapons in the direction that the arrow flew from. Ian turned his head.

"Oh, what is this? It was blocked."

"Did you feel guilty?"

"What are you talking about?"

They were humans. Two men and one woman. The man aimed the arrow again. This time, the bow was aimed towards Ian. As soon as Ian raised his sword, the woman chanted a spell.

"Red flames that consume the world, rest on this arrow according to my will. Enchant Fire!"

The arrow lit up and the man let go of the bowstring. The fire arrow flew towards Ian. Ian reflexively wielded his greatsword. It hit the arrow but the fire broke out and hit Ian.

"Ugh!"

The fire was stuck to his body. Ian gritted his teeth and endured the burning pain. His status window sounded an alarm. At that moment, Kyawah extended both hands.

"Kyawah – ak! Kyawah – ak!"

Then an unknown force wrapped around Ian. The fire disappeared. The pain also went away and strength rose inside his body.

"What, a goblin mage? That incantation?"

"Even dogs and cats are using magic these days."

Ian raised his gaze.



The three humans were having a leisurely conversation in front of the goblins and orcs. White stars shone on their forehead. They were users.

“Wait a minute!”

They stopped as the orc spoke, “What is it?”

“I am a user.”

Ian took off the Blacksmith Company’s bandana that he was still wearing. A white star shone on Ian’s forehead. Their eyes widened.

“What, an orc user? Orc? Really?”

“Are you one of those orc users?”

“That story was true?”

The man lowered his bow and said, “Come out from there.”

“Huh?”

“Orc, get away from there. Let’s get rid of those beggars.”

Ian turned his head. The goblins were trembling while holding their weapons. The tree roots and grass that they had been eating a moment ago were on the floor. Kyawak had a very determined expression on his face.

Ian shook his head.

“Let the goblins go.”

“Huh?” They looked at each other. “Why? Is it a quest?”

“I know these goblins.”

“Huh?”

Their expressions showed that they didn’t understand. Ian spoke again. “They are friends.”

“Friends?”

“Yes.”

He raised his greatsword as an answer. It was a statement that he would attack if they didn't agree. The goblins watched Ian with impressed eyes. The users whispered among themselves.

“Doesn't he sound like a role-player?”

“Well... anyway...”

“I'd rather...”

They came to a conclusion and nodded. The female magician smiled and said, “Orc! Then if we don't attack, can you tell us the way?”

“The way?”

“Yes. We have a quest but we don't know the orc territory.”

“Where are you going?”

“What was it, Basque? Basque Village? We have to go that way.”

Ian was also heading there. He nodded. “Yes.”

“Yah! Thank you.”

The users withdrew.

Ian looked at Kyawak. It was earlier than he expected, but it was time to part.

“Ian kyak, thank you kyak.”

“Thank you for the nice meal.”

“It is nothing kieek. I hope we meet again someday keek. Beware of the north kyaak.”

Ian extended his fist. Kyawak seemed to know the orc greeting as he bumped it with

his small fist. The orc and goblin's fists hit.

"Stay alive."

"Alive kyak!"

The goblins all waved. Ian parted with the goblins.

A user asked, "It looks like you really are friends with the goblins. When did you meet?"

"Today."

"You are really sociable, to be befriending a goblin in one day. Why did you pick an orc? Just because?"

The magician had a lot to say. The men were an archer and a warrior holding a sword and shield. They looked like moderately high level users. They originally lived in the city of humans, but they received a quest and came here.

"These big brothers came to help me. In order to acquire a magician skill, I need to get something from an orc shaman."

"What?"

"I don't know right now. It's a power that an orc shaman has and will fuse together to make a new skill. Isn't it amazing?"

"That's right."

"If I get this skill, then I will have 10 skills. Huhu. Orc, do you have a lot of skills? Isn't the orc a hard species to play as?"

As the female magician continued to chatter on, the archer asked from behind, "Why are you talking so much?"

"Jeez, what's wrong with it? This is the first time I've seen an orc. Isn't it also your first time?"

"That's correct."

“How long have you been an orc? What’s your level?”

Ian answered honestly. “Level 10.”

“10? You’re still a beginner.”

“I see, then it isn’t too late. You can still reset.”

The tense men relaxed as Ian’s level was revealed.

Ian looked at the map that he obtained from Orcrox Fortress and guided them. The closer they got to Basque Village, the more the surroundings started to change. There were occasional animal skulls hanging from the lush trees and strange altars for magic rituals were everywhere. Crows cried out over their heads.

“It is vaguely eerie.”

The temperature in the forest was cool. The dense foliage didn’t allow a lot of light to leak through. The sun soon started sinking. It became even darker. Something seemed to appear beyond the darkness of the dense forest.

The female magician stopped talking. They walked quietly. After walking a while, a light could be seen. There was a log house with light coming from the windows. A strange black smoke rose from the chimney. They looked at each other.

“Here...”

“It is dark and the path is hard to see. It would be good to rest here.”

“Yes.”

“Let’s try it once.”

The house resembled Grant’s log cabin. It was an orc home. Ian took the lead with the three human users following behind him. Ian knocked on the door.

“Please wait.”

A voice was heard from inside. The door opened and an orc appeared. He was wearing a necklace made of animal bones and animal skins, looking exactly like the shamans

that Ian had seen in Orcrox Fortress.

The orc said with a soft expression, “You are alive, young warrior.”

He also greeted the three users behind Ian. “You are alive, humans.”

He opened the door wide. It was as if he knew they were coming.

“I am the shaman Antuak. Guests are always welcome.”

# CHAPTER 21

## HUMANS AND SHAMAN (2)

---

Antuak's house was cozy.

Firewood burned in the fireplace, emitting warmth. Ian and the three human users sat at the table as Antuak served them warm potato soup. The users hesitated at first, but started enthusiastically eating after trying the first spoonful. They ate the soup in silence for a while.

"Umm..."

No one was able to open their mouths. Antuak just smiled.

"Is there something that you want to ask?"

"Well..."

Ian and the three human users looked at each other. At length, the female magician opened her mouth. It was the question that no one could utter.

"Over there... is she sick?"

Her eyes were looking behind Antuak.

A female orc was lying on the bed. She was staring into the air with a blanket covering her neck. Even though she blinked occasionally, all she did was lie down and stare blankly into the air. She didn't respond at all when they had entered. Her eyes were grey as if the colours had faded away.

Antuak muttered with a wry smile.

"Bul'tar..."

Bul'tar. Ian's eyes widened. It was the orc's motto, but it gave off a different feeling from usual. It felt old. It was closer to the original pronunciation. Ian repeated it to himself. Bul'tar.

“She is my wife, Aruna.”

“Heol. You are married. So why is she bedridden?”

The conversation between the orc and the magician created a strange gap, like an old historical man talking to a young contemporary student.

“She has been possessed by a different dimension.”

“Huh?”

“Aruna was a shaman like me. She was interested in other worlds. I warned her about the danger, but I couldn’t stop her curiosity. Eventually, she completed the magic to look at other dimensions and cast it. It is something that our spirits can’t afford to see. In the end, she lost consciousness in that other dimension.”

It was a story that was hard to believe. Everyone nodded.

“Now she is forever contemplating that world, forgetting who she is. It is an incomprehensible world where the laws that we know don’t exist. I can only wait for her to come back.”

Antuak rose and stood by Aruna. His rugged hand touched Aruna’s cheek. She was still looking somewhere else.

“It has been only me and Aruna in this house for a long time, so I am glad that guests like you have come.”

Antuak turned around and smiled.

“Yes. Travellers, why did you come to this place?”

The users looked at each other. Ian replied instead,

“They are heading for Basque Village to get some help from the orc shamans.”

“It is a great thing that humans need help from us orcs.”

Antak looked at the staff that he had leaned against the wall. A surge of unknown power was coming from it.

“Us orcs were originally close to humans, until the past wars separated everything. I also had numerous human friends. Yes, humans. What help do you need?”

“We...”

The users exchanged glances. The magician replied,

“In fact, I don’t know yet. I just know that I will find out once I arrive in Basque Village.”

“Is that so? Too bad. I hope that it works out.”

Antuak gave more soup to the archer who had finished his bowl. The archer bowed his head and drank the soup again.

“Then what brings you here, young warrior?” Antuak looked at Ian.

“I’m not a warrior yet.”

“You are the only one who can determine that.”

“I am going to meet Tashaquil.”

“Hoh, Tashaquil. Why?”

“I want to ask what a true warrior is.”

“You are searching for the path of a warrior.”

Antuak nodded. “I hope you find the answer. Bul’tar.”

“Thank you. Bul’tar.”

The magician, who was watching the conversation between the two orcs, got up.

“I’ve never been to an orc house before, so can I see it, Orc Shaman?”

“Of course. There isn’t much to see, though.”

All three users got up.



Antuak's house was wider than it looked from the outside. There were tools for magic, as well as the animal skulls that decorated the forest outside. The burning candles revealed the weird magical tools. The female magician asked Antuak a variety of questions. Antuak was kind enough to explain. The archer and human warrior followed behind Antuak.

Ian was left alone with Aruna. She was still staring at an unknown place. Somehow, he felt sorry.

"Please wake up. Your husband is waiting for you," Ian quietly whispered.

It was at that moment.

"Huh?"

A long shadow quickly passed over the wall.

"Heeok...!"

There was also a small moan. Ian hurriedly turned around.

Antuak was sitting down. The edge of a blade protruded from his chest. The users were standing behind him.

"What is this...!"

Ian immediately lifted his greatsword. The archer aimed at him. Ian hesitated. The female magician said in a youthful voice.

"Orc, thanks a lot! This was easily resolved because of you."

"What are you doing?"

"What's the big deal? I came to the orcs to get a skill."

"You said you were seeking help from Basque Village..."

"Ahyo~"

She murmured as fire appeared around her hands. "What help? The Orcs are helping

me. If I obtain the heart of a shaman, then I can receive a skill. So don't blame me too much, yes?"

She giggled. The men also started laughing.

"Well, his wife is sick, so I guess I'll send her along with him. Is that okay?"

"Keeok... Aruna... she..."

"If she is left alone, then she would just die of starvation."

The archer kicked the sword stuck in Antuak's back.

"Cough!"

"A monster pretending to be something else, how funny."

"His wife Aruna... Another dimension... Puhahat. I thought I was watching a historical drama."

They spat on Antuak's head.

Ian's fists shook. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Antuak was just an orc who loved his wife. An orc who was friendly to the guests and made good soup, Antuak. An orc who knew how to pronounce Bul'tar in the traditional war, that was Antuak. It was a short meeting, but Ian already knew three things about Antuak. He still had some secrets of the world, and some philosophies that Ian wasn't familiar with.

All of that was now collapsing, due to that sword. It was an insulting sight.

The users mocked, "Are you mad? Play this game more moderately. It's like you are a real orc, instead of role-playing."

"You could've been a human or elf. Why did you choose an orc?"

Ian rushed forward angrily. The arrow flew towards him.

"Ugh!"

The archer's arrow was fast, and pierced Ian's thigh. Ian failed to win against the force and fell. Then the man kicked Ian in the face.

"Cough!"

"Resisting is in vain. I don't want to kill you, but it can't be helped. I'll just kill you."

"Even a user?" The female magician asked.

"What is an orc user? They are just mobs."

"Big Brother, is it okay to kill a user? Isn't there a PK penalty?"

"Elder Lord doesn't have anything like that."

"Is that so? Good."

The woman giggled. Ian tried to stand up only to be kicked again. The woman chanted a spell. Something invisible restrained Ian. His strength fell. He couldn't move a single muscle. All he could do was collapse.

He would manage somehow if it was a hand-to-hand fight, but he couldn't resist magic. Ian was still too weak.

"Keheeo... Aru... na..."

Antuak's body was completely breaking down. The male archer and female magician searched until they found his heart.

Then the warrior approached Aruna. He stared at her as she gazed towards a distant place and stabbed a dagger in her chest. Aruna kept staring at the distant place as blood poured from her mouth.

Ian pushed strength to his entire body.

"...Kuaaah...!"

He gritted his teeth and twisted. However, his body wouldn't budge. The arrow stuck in his thigh pressed painfully against him.

“Don’t fight. It’s over.”

The male archer smiled and pulled back his bowstring. The arrowhead pointed towards Ian’s head. Ian gave a last hurrah.

“Kuaaaaahhhhh!”

His body moved slightly.

“Kuaaaaaaaack!”

He stretched out his hand with all his strength. His body moved. Just a little, just a little more.

“What, does he have high magic resistance?”

“An orc? Finish it quickly.”

The archer let go of the bowstring. The arrow pierced Ian’s skull. His eyes dimmed as everything in front of him became blurry. Darker than black. He felt like he would sink forever.

Death.

.....

.....

.....

The darkness blurred.

He opened his eyes. An orc stood in front of him. The orc was standing at the door of a house.

The orc looked towards Ian and said, “You are alive, young warrior.”

Ian was standing... He was standing in front of Antuak’s house. He could see the familiar scenery inside the house due to the slightly open door. A stove, the table, and Aruna. Ian couldn’t understand.

The orc, Antuak, was smiling in front of him.

“Why are you just standing there?”

“What...?”

Voices were heard from behind him. “Orc, why are you staring blankly?”

Ian turned his head. The three human users were waiting behind Ian. The female magician’s eyes were as round as a ball.

Antuak asked, “Young warrior, what did you see?”

“I...”

“See, what is he talking about?”

Ian couldn’t say anything as he looked between Antuak and the users. Antuak had definitely fed them soup inside his house, and then the users had certainly murdered Antuak, his wife, and Ian.

This...

Ian looked at Antuak. He was smiling as if he knew what Ian was thinking.

“What will you do?”

Ian finally realized it. It was the truth revealed by the shaman Antuak.

The three users had used Ian to approach the shaman and to kill him for the shaman’s heart.

Ian opened his mouth, “Magician.”

“Huh?”

“The thing that you have to acquire...”

“Yes.”

“Is it a shaman’s heart?”

“Uh...?”

They were stunned. The quick-witted warrior picked up a knife while the archer grabbed an arrow. However, Ian’s greatsword was already swinging towards his goal. The magician’s head flew into the air.

“W-W-What?”

“Fuck!”

They stepped back as Ian moved forward, swinging his greatsword. The warrior blocked with his shield. Ian used a downward blow.

“Ugh!”

The warrior held up the shield, but collapsed as he was unable to overcome the shock. An arrow flew towards Ian. He leaned back to evade it. He stepped on the enemy’s shield and jumped, the face of the archer approaching his blade. Ian’s greatsword sliced through his head vertically.

His upper body was split apart from top to bottom. The archer fell down like a doll split from the middle.

“Crazy!”

The warrior abandoned his weapons and shield and fled. Ian threw his greatsword, which flew through the air and stabbed the warrior in the back.

“Kuheeok!”

The warrior fell forward. Ian walked over and pulled out his greatsword, his body twitching before falling still. Ian lifted his bloody greatsword.

The man’s body turned to white particles and collapsed. The other bodies of the users scattered as well. After the death process, only their equipment remained on the floor.

Antuak just watched all of this.

Ian stood in front of Antuak. Antuak said with a soft smile, “I am the shaman Antuak.”

He opened the door wide. It was as if he knew they were coming.

“Guests are always welcome.”

## CHAPTER 22

### ORCROX WARRIORS (1)

---

Antuak welcomed Ian into his house like he had before. Aruna was lying in bed, staring into space.

Ian and Antuak sat facing each other. This reality didn't differ from the earlier illusion. He felt like he already had a long conversation with Antuak. Ian was now eating the potato soup alone. Antuak's attitude was also the same.

"You killed them all."

"Yes."

"You saw what they would do, but they hadn't even done it yet."

He glanced around. It was at the very spot where the users stabbed Antuak in the back. Ian formed a fist before releasing it.

"You don't regret it?"

"Yes, I don't feel regret." Ian's expression was firm.

"Was it the right act as a warrior?"

"I want to become a warrior, not a saint."

"I see..."

Antuak nodded and beckoned, as if to eat the soup. Ian ate the soup. It was still delicious.

"You are stronger than I thought. I am relieved."

He walked towards Aruna's bed. Her face moved. Ian jumped, but Aruna was still looking somewhere into the distance. Her grey eyes moved through the air. Antuak stroked her face and asked, "Are you going to visit Tashaquil?"



“Yes.”

“This will show you the way.”

Antuak moved his finger. A faint ember emerged from his fingertip. It revolved in the air and approached Ian, moving around as if it had its own will. Ian stretched out his hand and the ember touched down on his finger. It wasn't hot.

Antuak said, “I'd like to treat you some more, but there is no time.”

“Huh?”

“Go before it is too late.”

“Too late?”

“Tashaquil will know when you meet him.”

Antuak was giving him an unknown smile. Ian didn't feel like Antuak's words were light.

Ian rose from his seat. He poured a second serving of potato soup into his bowl. The soup warmed his insides. Ian slurped up the soup and set down the empty bowl. It tasted better than he previously remembered. Ian gave a thumbs up.

“The best potato soup.”

“The best is only that much.”

Antuak laughed and shook his head.

“The best potato soup is actually the one that my wife makes.”

“Ah...”

“One day, I will invite you if my wife comes back. I want to show you what the best potato soup is.”

Ian smiled.

“Yes. I am looking forward to it.”

“Tashaquil is waiting. Go.”

Antuak gestured and the door opened by itself. A cool breeze blew in. It was still night outside the door. The ember danced around Ian’s finger before flying to the door, as if it were beckoning him.

Ian looked at Antuak. He was unlikely to forget the serenely smiling Antuak.

“I will stop by again. Stay alive.”

“Stay alive. Bul’tar.”

“Bul’tar!”

Ian left Antuak’s house. The ember was busy. Ian followed after the ember before looking back.

“.....!”

There was nothing. It was just an empty clearing with moonlight shining. Nothing was there in the place where Antuak’s house had been. The log house with the warm light and smoke had disappeared.

He looked forward again. The ember provided by Antuak led the way for Ian, as if it had its own life. That ember, it was clearly Antuak. Ian felt possessed by a ghost. He recalled his past memories. Antuak definitely wasn’t a lie.

Ian would meet him again one day. Such a great shaman had told him to quickly meet Tashaquil. His message was clearly meaningful. Ian’s footsteps became faster. Ian focused on following the ember, running through the dark forest for a long time.

He burned through the orc’s stamina. Finally, he saw a light and some houses appeared in the distance. In addition, various tent-like structures were spread out. It was Basque Village. The scenery of Basque Village revealed under the moonlight was beautiful.

Ian’s speed increased.

He could see orcs coming out of the entrance. Ian waved his hand to catch their attention. They came to a stop.

“I am alive!”

One of the orcs responded, “I am alive. You are?”

“I am an apprentice warrior, Ian.”

All of the orcs were shamans. At Ian’s answer, an orc who was seeing them off came forward. The shamans moved out of the way for him.

He was a shaman with a face full of tattoos and a striped hide around him that was clearly tiger skin. There was a huge skull hanging from his neck, but Ian didn’t know what animal it came from. The force around him was incomparable to the other shamans in the vicinity. He felt like a giant mass of magic power.

Ian instantly knew who he was. One of the great masters who led the orcs along with Instructor Lenox, Tashaquil.

“I am alive. Young orc.”

“I am alive. Are you Tashaquil?”

“Indeed. Are you Ian, the apprentice warrior taught by Lenox?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“What did you come here for?”

Ian tried to point to the ember that led him here. However, the ember was gone. It faded away, just like Antuak’s house. Once again, Ian was confused. Ian spoke the name like he wanted Tashaquil to acknowledge Antuak’s existence.

“Do you know the shaman Antuak?”

“.....!”

Tashaquil’s eyes shook.

“Where did you hear that name?”

“I heard it from him.”

“You met him?”

“That’s right. Antuak told me to go to Tashaquil, and said that Tashaquil would be waiting for me.”

“.....”

The emotions in Tashaquil’s eyes deepened. The shamans who were about to leave Basque Village told Tashaquil, “Tashaquil, we will leave now.”

“Wait a minute.”

“Huh?”

Tashaquil turned towards Ian.

“Young orc.”

“Yes.”

“Antuak told you to find me?”

“Yes. He said to hurry.”

“How long has it been since you left Orcrox Fortress?”

“It has been a couple of days.”

“I see...”

Tashaquil sighed. He shook his staff and arranged his thoughts. Then Tashaquil opened his mouth again, “Kinjur!”

“Yes!”

“Take this apprentice warrior with you.”

“I understand.”

It was suddenly decided that Ian would accompany them. Judging by their actions, it seemed like there was no time to waste.

“Where are we going?”

“Orcrox.”

What was happening at Orcrox that required such a large group to head there? Ian looked at the shamans. They were armed. Apart from magic staffs, melee weapons such as axes and swords hung from their backs. Inside the shaman’s clothing was leather armor. Their eyes were also grim.

They looked like soldiers heading towards a fight.

“There is no time to explain in detail. Just follow them.”

“I understand.”

Ian nodded at Tashaquil’s words. Tashaquil glanced at Kinjur.

“Go now.”

“Yes. I am going. Stay alive.”

“Yes. See you all alive again.”

Kinjur shook his staff from the front of the group. An unknown force emerged from his staff. Waves of magic power moved around them. The bodies of the shamans trembled. Ian felt the waves of magic power penetrate his body.

Power rose up inside him. His body was light, it felt like he could run towards the horizon right now. He could feel the wind brushing against his skin. A beast-like sound emerged from his mouth.

*Grrrrr...*

The shaman’s spirit magic!

The shamans moved out, Ian also being one with them. Kinjur took the lead and the rest followed. It was like a group of wolves being led by the alpha wolf. They disappeared into the darkness of the forest.

Tashaquil watched them leave.

Silence fell. There was only the sound of his breathing as moonlight fell around him. He was locked in deep thoughts. He shook his staff out of habit, the magic power moving along with him. The moonlight covered his head.

“Antuak...”

How long had it been since he heard that name?

Tashaquil muttered, “You are alive...”

His voice was wet. “Were you alive, Master...?”

It was said in a whisper. Suddenly, an ember appeared in the air. The ember revolved around Tashaquil’s head. Tashaquil stared at it blankly. He stretched out his hand, but couldn’t grab it. The ember danced in the air before merging with the sky.

The ember gradually faded. As Tashaquil looked in front of him, the night sky soon turned bright.



“The shamans have arrived.” Hoyt said.

“I see.”

Lenox was looking at his axe. A dry cloth was passed over the sharp axe. The clean surface shone brilliantly. A face could be seen in it.

“Lenox. Ian came back with the shamans.”

“The apprentice?”

“Yes.”

“How interesting.”

Lenox turned his head and looked at Hoyt. “Yes, what did you see? Do you think he will be a good warrior?”

“I’m sure of it.”

“Hoh.”

“He will be a real warrior.”

“A real warrior.”

Lenox laughed loudly. He seemed cheerful.

“Hoyt, who is a real warrior to you?”

“It is you, Lenox.”

“Don’t act like that.”

“I am serious.”

“Kulkul. A real warrior...”

Then the door opened. An orc entered Lenox’s room. They asked, “Are you really going?”

“That’s right.”

“Don’t be too hasty...”

“It is now or it will be too late.”

It was Tanya, the administrator of Orcrox. She was responsible for the administration and operations of Orcrox Fortress.

“The enemy will just become stronger if we give them more time.” Lenox explained.

“Hoo. I understand. Everybody is waiting for you.”

“I’ll be out soon. Thank you as always, Tanya.”

“It was nothing.”

Tanya glanced at Hoyt then she left the room. Lenox looked at Hoyt again and said, “We should take him.”

“It is still too early.”

“To be a warrior, he has to see the wide world.”

Lenox placed the axe on his back and grabbed the helmet hanging on the wall.

It was a black, solid steel helmet. Lenox looked at it for a while. There were cuts and scratches everywhere due to its long history, but the skeleton was still strong. Lenox traced the helmet with his fingers before placing it on his head.

Lenox’s face couldn’t be seen due to the shadow from the helmet. Only an intense light shone from within the helmet. Lenox smiled.

“I also want to see a true warrior.”



## CHAPTER 23

### ORCROX WARRIORS (2)

---

Ian arrived at Orcrox Fortress in an instant, thanks to the power of the shamans. The group entered Orcrox with a firm expression. The Orcrox warriors and shamans were already preparing for the campaign. Since dawn, the entire Orcrox Fortress had been crowded.

Ian was about to ask what was happening when he found a familiar face. It was Grom, who was surrounded by warriors and responding to something. The warriors questioned him for a while before leaving. Then Grom turned with a sigh.

Ian went up to him.

“What is happening?”

Grom looked over with a startled expression. His eyes trembled.

“How, w-why are you here?”

“I went to Basque Village and met the shamans.”

“.....”

“Why are they doing this? Is a war happening?”

Grom avoided Ian’s eyes.

“...?”

“It’s because of me.”

“Huh?”

“I... by chance...” He stuttered before sighing. “Hoo. Let me explain. I found something strange.”

“What?”

“I went to the north...”

Grom started his long explanation.



He headed north while struggling over how to act like a warrior.

The north of Orcrox Fortress wasn't a place for apprentice warriors to go. Only the top rankers among the users could deal with the fearsome monsters there.

Orcrox Fortress itself was built to block the monsters in the north. Grom was wandering haphazardly to the north and found something strange while running away from some trolls.

It was a cave in a gap between two rocks, where he managed to hide. The trolls left because they couldn't find him, but Grom entered the cave due to his curiosity.

He walked for a little bit and a wide space appeared. Torches were hanging on the walls. A human shadow stood there. The shape was human, but it wasn't a human. The light from the torch revealed the terrifying face of a rotting undead.

Death knight!

The death knight whispered in an eerie voice.

“Thiss issn't a pplace whereee yooou can sttand ssafely... Intruderssss sssshould beee...”

Grom turned and fled in terror. The death knight chased him and swung its sword, causing Grom to reflexively block it with his axe. Grom was thrown back by the tremendous power, but the death knight also rolled across the floor with Grom.

The death knight's cold hand gripped Grom's shoulder. Grom was terrified and started to attack the arm with his axe. Once, twice, three times, many times. In the end, the Death Knight's wrist was cut off.

“Kkuaaaaah...”

The death knight screamed painfully, emitting a gut-wrenching wail that disturbed the

soul.

Grom frantically ran away. The death knight's shouts could be heard from behind him. He ran through the tunnel, out of the cave, and all the way back to Orcrox Fortress. He used all of his strength to avoid the trolls and goblins.

Finally, he was able to breathe in front of the trustworthy guards of Orcrox Fortress. However, the faces of the guards were abnormal.

"Apprentice... What is that?"

Grom followed their gaze towards his shoulder. The death knight's rotting hand was still there.

It held onto Grom's shoulder like it was still alive. As Grom became surprised, its grip became even stronger. The nails pierced Grom's shoulder. Grom screamed.

The guards grasped the severity of the situation and informed Tanya and Lenox. They immediately decided on a subjugation mission. If a death knight was guarding the entrance, it meant that something stronger was inside the cave.

Lenox guessed that it was a lich.

The fact that a lich was located to the north of Orcrox meant that it was probably attempting evil magic. It was dangerous since there was enough dark power to still affect the hand, even after Grom escaped to Orcrox. Such an enemy had to be killed before it could accumulate more power as time passed.

The decision was swift and the warriors gathered under Lenox's command.

Thus, a raid was created with Grom as the guide.



"This is completely..." Ian said, "Isn't it a dungeon raid?"

A dungeon raid was called the flower of virtual reality games! Elder Lord was no exception. Raid videos were always a hot topic.

"Yes but... Is Ian also going?"

“I want to go.”

“It will be dangerous, so you can just not go...”

Grom was somehow acting really negatively. Grom was someone who always rejoiced when the game progressed. Was the death knight that terrifying?

As Ian was thinking this, Lenox and Hoyt appeared in front of the troops. There was also a female orc that Ian saw for the first time. She was Tanya, the administrator of Orcrox Fortress.

Lenox looked around at the warriors and shamans. In a short amount of time, many orcs had gathered under Lenox’s name.

Ian was filled with expectation. Lenox would yell passionately and boost morale. Maybe there would even be slaps to wake up their spirits. But he was unexpectedly calm.

Lenox walked forward and the area became quiet.

“Our goal is an undead dungeon. It is estimated that there will be a lich present, but I don’t know what the risks are. The worst situation might happen. But...”

Every orc listened to Lenox.

“We have to do it.”

It was a low voice that was filled with a strong faith. The warriors nodded.

“Stay alive.”

The orcs raised their weapons, shouting simultaneously.

“Bul’tar————!”

Shouts rang out through Orcrox Fortrass. Lenox nodded and led the way, the warriors and shamans following behind him. They formed units and a formation behind Lenox.

Ian, who was at the back, suddenly caught Lenox’s eyes.

“Apprentice.”

“Yes!”

Ian was nervous. An apprentice warrior might not be useful, but he didn’t want to miss this. Ian gazed at Lenox with earnest eyes.

Lenox grinned.

“Don’t fall behind and keep up.”

Ian also smiled at his words.

“Understood!”

Hoyt smiled from his position behind Lenox. Gulda approached and hit Ian’s back. The shaman Kinjur blessed the whole unit. It was the first great battle since Ian first became an orc.



There were 50 warriors and 20 shamans. 70 orcs marched through the forest. Their burly shoulders and large size caused an intense momentum as Ian followed behind them.

Grom guided Lenox to the place while Ian walked with the other warriors in the back. Gulda stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Ian.

“Apprentice, is this your first time in a dungeon?”

“Yes.”

“It will be interesting. Kuhahahal.”

He laughed with the halberd on his shoulder.

Whether it was due to the power of the shamans or something else, an unknown force spread throughout the unit. The occasional monsters were swept away by the orc warriors like fallen leaves.

The monsters in the north weren't at the level of goblins or direwolves.

From trolls, giant mantises, wandering wyverns, and worms emerging from the ground, there were powerful monsters that Ian would've fallen prey to if he were alone.

But all the warriors, supported by the shaman magic, handled it easily. Lenox's axe was particularly terrifying. Not even the trolls could recover from his blows.

The constantly smiling Gulda was also awesome. As Ian was defending against a mantis, Gulda ran over and cut off all of the mantis' limbs with a laugh.

The strength of the orc warriors was terrifying.

They soon arrived at their destination. It was a rock located under a mountain ridge. There was a crevasse hidden behind rocks, but there was clearly a cave there.

The shamans flinched as soon as they saw the cave.

"Such intense magic..."

Ian also felt a cold chill down his spine. Lenox spoke to Grom, who had guided them this far.

"Go in."

"Huh?"

"Aren't you going in?"

"I thought I was just guiding you up to here..."

"It will be more dangerous if you are left alone."

Lenox grabbed Grom's collar and entered first. The orcs followed one by one through the narrow entrance.

Light from the shamans revealed the cave inside. The warriors and shamans walked in a line. Soon there was a wider tunnel. Their formations were set up again. There was evidence that someone had artificially created this area.

The air was heavy. This was a dungeon. An uncomfortable feeling was stuck to Ian's body. Somehow, it was hard to move.

Then the tunnel opened up into a wide space. Torches and crystals lit up the inside. There was the shadow of a human standing in the middle.

"...That?"

It was the death knight that attacked Grom. The death knight lifted its sword.

"Youuuuuu oooooorcs... Leaveeee hereeeee..."

It was an eerie tone that seemed to rise from the Abyss. Ian got goose bumps.

"Otherrrrrrwise... a ggggruesome deathhhh... Weeeelcome eternalll painnnnn..."

A fearsome presence! A terrifying threat. Then Ian suddenly discovered something strange.

"....."

The death knight took a step back as it threatened the orcs, but it wasn't noticeable in the creepy voice.

The orcs were shaken.

"Not even feeling nervous after seeing these numbers... It truly is a death knight."

"Ohh... when strong people die, they become death knights."

"How terrible. We can't lose."

"Kuock... I will fight even if it means death. Bul'tar...!"

The death knight was getting more distant. It was subtly walking backwards towards a door! If this was left alone, it would get further away. Ian hurriedly picked up a stone and threw it at the death knight.

*Bam.*

It hit the death knight on the head.

*Rattle rattle.*

All eyes turned to Ian for a moment. The moment ended, but Ian shouted without hesitation.

“Catch it!”

The death knight turned around and started running. The orcs regained their spirits and chased it. Dozens of orcs chased a death knight through the cave. One orc warrior threw his weapon. The axe turned round and round and struck the death knight.

“Kkuoooooh...”

The death knight fell to the ground. The orcs surrounded it and the beating began.

“W-W-Wait a minute!” The death knight exclaimed.

“What, this bastard can talk properly?”

“Was it just an act?”

As the orcs beat it up even more, the death knight gave up resisting. Lenox approached and grabbed the death knight.

“Death knight, who is the one that summoned you?”

“I cannn’t answeerrrr...”

*Peeok!*

“Talk properly.”

“I-I can’t tell you. If I speak, then I will be destroyed.”

“When did you arrive here?”

“It wasn’t long ago. I was told to protect the entrance a week ago.”



“How many more guys like you are there?”

“When I was summoned, there were skeletons and gargoyles. There would be more now. There are also several other death knights...”

“The lich?”

“I-I can’t say...”

Lenox struck the death knight, which rolled across the floor with a moan. Lenox looked over the wide space with a determined expression on his face.

“Strange.”

“What do you mean?””

“Death knights aren’t this weak.”

“Then...”

“It’s a trap.”

At the end of the wide space was a large door. Lenox approached it. The door moved.

The firmly closed door started to slowly open, like a demon opening its gaping maw. The darkness meant that no one could see what was inside.

However, it couldn’t be avoided.

“Enter.”

From now on, there was no telling what dangers might be inside. Lenox took the lead and the orcs followed silently behind him. The hollow eyes of the death knight with its throat cut stared after them.

## CHAPTER 24

### ORCROX WARRIORS (3)

---

The orc warriors passed through the giant door, which led into a deep tunnel.

The true dungeon raid started.

The first enemies they met was a group of skeletons at the very beginning of the tunnel. Bones were scattered here and there. There were skulls embedded in the walls, rib bones on the ground, thigh bones, and various other bones strewn about. The orcs passed them without thinking.

However, soon the sound of bones moving could be heard.

The orcs warily looked around. The bones were moving by themselves and assembling together. Dark magic power appeared between the bones to hold the dead bodies together. They became bony skeleton warriors. They were the poor undead who died, but couldn't rest and became the dolls of a necromancer.

Ian raised his greatsword. The skeletons holding weapons started to walk forward. However, something else caught Ian's eyes. The other orcs became silent as they noticed it as well. Their hands were shaking. Ian also had a death grip on his greatsword.

Those bones. They were revived orc skeletons. Among the human skeleton soldiers, orc skeleton soldiers approached with axes and halberds, their fragmented helmets sticking to their skulls. It was a miserable appearance without any honor.

The furious orc warriors rushed out at the same time. The majestic magic of the shamans echoed throughout the cave.

Ian also wielded his greatsword. The movements of the bony warriors were bizarre, but their strength and speed were fearsome. His sword bounced off the ribs of a human skeleton soldier while the skeleton soldier's sword aimed at Ian's neck.

Ian ducked and swung his sword again. It hit with a loud clang, causing no damage to his opponent. At that moment, an unknown power nestled in Ian's body and his

greatsword shone with a blue light.

A shaman's blessing! If this was the case, his attacks would now work.

The blade slammed into the skeleton soldier and its arm was broken. The skeleton soldier reached out to Ian with its remaining hand. Ian stretched out his hand and grabbed it, his greatsword striking its skull.

The skull cracked into pieces and its strength disappearing from the skeleton's hand. All contact between bones was lost as the skeleton soldier collapsed.

One skeleton was taken care of. Ian wanted time to breathe, but another attack flew towards him.

It was an orc skeleton soldier with its huge axe aimed at Ian's head. He ducked forward and narrowed the gap.

Ian shouted as he swung his greatsword. The orc skeleton soldier avoided his attack and their weapons collided with each other. Ian wasn't a match when it came to a battle of strength. The muscular strength of the skeletons soldiers was of a different caliber, due to the dark magic. Ian couldn't push him away and was instead pushed back.

In the moment that Ian was about to give up the battle of strength...

'Rest...' Someone whispered.

Ian raised his gaze.

'Give me rest...'

It was a faint whisper, like the wind. He didn't know if he actually heard it with his ears or if it was inside his head, but it gave him a ray of hope. The eyes of the orc skeleton soldier turned towards Ian. Something was staring at him from the dark hollow where the eyes should've been.

The orc skeleton soldier twisted his body, the axe tearing past Ian's arm. Blood splattered all over.

"Ugh!"

Red blood covered the face of the orc skeleton soldier.

‘Warrior, for me, honorable rest...’

Ian’s blood ran down the skull of the orc skeleton soldier. His blood, which fell on the orbital bones, was like the blood of the orc skeleton soldier.

Ian nodded. Unknown emotions coursed through him.

Ian didn’t know much about Elder Lord. He didn’t know what type of system it was, nor did he know the reality of Elder Lord. He didn’t know about the artificial intelligence that caused their emotions to resemble humans.

But to Ian, Elder Lord was another world. Everything that he encountered in Elder Lord seemed like it was living in reality.

The orc warriors around him roared as they fought. Lenox’s voice in the front encouraged the warriors. The solemn shamans recited spells for the undead orc warriors.

In front of Ian, the orc skeleton soldier shed bitter tears as he asked for a honorable rest. If this wasn’t real, then what was reality?

Ian swung his greatsword. He had to cut down this shame of the orcs. The shaman’s spell was nestled in his blade, casting a blue glow over the face of the orc skeleton soldier.

Lenox’s shout rang through the tunnel.

“An honorable rest——!”

“Rest!”

Ian and all the orcs shouted at the same time. Ian and the orc skeleton soldier collided.



“Team Leader-nim, the system is locked.”

“What, again!?”

“It is in Protect Mode.”

“What is it this time?”

“This is a new situation. It says that access is temporarily unavailable due to system synchronization.”

“Dammit!”

Park Jujin threw away the documents that he had been reading.

He looked at the huge white structure floating in the centre of the system control room. It was a smooth surface with no cracks or openings. This white sphere controlled all of the systems. No, that wasn't right.

It was 'Elder Lord'. That sphere was the world of Elder Lord itself. To be precise, it was the main core system, 'Albino', that computed and controlled everything in Elder Lord.

Elder Lord was run by the core system Albino. Nobody knew what logic it operated on, what programs were built into it, and what exactly it was.

This was all the legacy of the genius scientist Yoo Jaehan. However, he disappeared. Today, there was no one who knew exactly what Albino was. Park Jujin, who inherited control as the genius after Yoo Jaehan, just watched everything as the manager, not the controller.

Those who were called operators and the affiliate of the Myeongsong Group called Elder Saga Corporation didn't understand what controlled Elder Lord. They could only use some surface cosmetic features.

“Yoo Jaehan, that bastard...”

Jujin muttered the name of the man he was always following behind. It was no longer envy or jealousy.

“What did you do...?”

Nobody knew how Elder Lord had achieved such a perfect virtual reality. The roughness of the previous generations of virtual reality games had all disappeared from Elder Lord. Even Park Jujin couldn't distinguish if it was the world real or virtual

when he first connected. He couldn't fathom how it was created.

The whole world was going crazy over Elder Lord, but the reality was that it was a mystery.

"Albino."

Park Jujin said. Albino didn't answer.

"Albino, what is this situation?"

Albino was the system, but it wasn't under their control. Albino usually ignored their questions and only occasionally answered when it thought that they needed it. Albino stayed silent.

"Dammit..."

Park Jujin grabbed his head. It was at that moment.

*-It is temporarily unavailable due to system user synchronization.*

Then Albino opened its mouth. Her voice was heard. Park Jujin looked at Albino's white body. The white system core replied with a distinctive female voice.

*-A user's assimilation rate has temporarily exceeded 90%. For both the system and the user's protection, system access is temporarily blocked.*

Park Jujin's mouth dropped open.

"What...?"

Park Jujin fixed his glasses., confusion flashing across his eyes. Albino didn't say anything else.

Park Jujin shouted, "Okay, everybody get off the system and start monitoring!"

"Y-Yes?"

"Check out any user who has this ability! Find the user with an assimilation rate of over 90%. 90%!"

“The number of personnel is lacking...”

“Look for them! The high level kids! Rankers! The ones who originally have a high assimilation rate! Find out if any of them are fighting or are in an urgent situation!”

“Y-Yes!”

“Now find them!”

At Park Jujin’s shout, all of the people in the control room jumped up and ran out. Now only Albino and Park Jujin were left in the room.

Park Jujin looked up at Albino. It was a white spherical machine. The system Albino was once again silent. As always, she seemed to be inside her own world.

Park Jujin sighed and picked up the papers that he had thrown away earlier. The contents of the document entered his eyes.

[Request form]

[The above VIP requests detailed information on whether this person is playing Elder Lord and what character he is playing...]

Park Jujin threw away the paper again.

“We can’t do that...”



The orcs descended into the depths of the dungeon. All of them were reduced to silence. Among the various undead revived by the forces of darkness, such as zombies and dullahans, orcs were occasionally included.

For orcs, the most important thing was ‘life’. Their very greeting involved the topic of life, and their motto, ‘Bul’tar’, was also about life. For that reason, death was even more sacred to them. Their lives had to be completed by their deaths.

Now their dead brethren were being insulted by an evil magician. Cold anger filled the hearts of the orcs. Laughter subsided from the orcs' face and a sharp momentum filled them. The orcs thoroughly crushed the undead in order to give rest to their brethren.

There were occasional injuries among the orc warriors.

"Kuooh..."

An orc warrior who had his arm cut off by an undead mantis sat down and groaned.

The other warriors sprinkled potions on him and fixed the cut section. Finally, the shamans cast a spell of recovery. The wounded area was corrupted, so it was unknown as to how it would heal. Maybe he wouldn't be able to use his arm again.

Lenox approached.

"Arctar, are you okay?"

"I'm okay Lenox."

"Go back to the entrance and wait with the other warriors."

"I can still fight! I will keep fighting, even if I die here!"

"Arctar."

Lenox grabbed his shoulder.

"This isn't where you will die."

"....."

"Like you always said, it should be in a fair fight against a dragon."

"...Kulkulkul. That's right."

"Believe in us and wait."

"I understand. I'm sorry Lenox."



The wounded orc hugged Lenox and walked towards the entrance of the dungeon. The orcs who couldn't fight anymore would wait at the entrance where the death knight had been killed. There weren't any dead orcs yet, but their fighting power had already decreased by a third.

"M-Me too..."

"...?"

Grom reached out to Lenox, showing off his injury. It wasn't a severe wound. Lenox's eyebrows went up.

"You are still able to fight."

"Well..."

"Apprentice, believe in yourself."

"Y-Yes..."

Grom crumpled and returned.

Ian asked Grom, "Are you okay?"

"Ah, yes. Yes."

"I saw you fighting well. Go until the end."

"Yes..."

Ian cocked his head.

As this dungeon raid progressed, Grom was acting strangely depressed. At first Ian thought that he was just scared of the death knight, but the death knight had been beaten up by the orcs. His mind just seemed to be elsewhere.

Grom followed behind the orc warriors. Ian walked alongside Grom.

Hoyt spoke from where he was standing in the front with Lenox, "Gather your strength. There isn't much left."

The dungeon capture had just reached the final stage. They arrived at the end of the tunnel, coming before a huge, spooky door.

There were three death knights standing in front of the door. They were different from the death knight at the entrance. A black haze was visible around them and dark energy was being exuded from them. The entire tunnel shook due to the dark power.

“Foooooooooooooooooolish oooooooooooooooooooooooooorcs...”

It was obvious that they were much stronger than the previous death knight. The eerie whispers of two voices overlapped and spread out. The noise was loud enough to cause them to forget what they were thinking and gave them goosebumps.

The death knights picked up their swords. Only three death knights!

However, just one of them gave off an incomparable pressure. Ian forcibly controlled his muscles and headed to the frontline. The orc warriors also raised their weapons, while the shamans started to chant spells.

The death knights walked forward. Their legs moved, but with a strange gait, like their legs were slipping along the ground. They narrowed the distance in an instant thanks to that. The death knights' swords clashed with the orc warriors.

The orcs were simultaneously thrown back.

Ian avoided the body of an orc warrior and firmly grasped his greatsword, swinging it at a death knight. Strangely, his body was really light. The enemy's attack became really clear.

At that moment, Ian didn't need anyone else's support. Ian's greatsword shot towards the death knight.

# CHAPTER 25

## BUL'TAR

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Bul'ta.

The more accurate pronunciation was Bul'tar.

It is a word familiar to the orcs in the present time. It seems that the 'r' ending has been omitted, and has now become the present form, Bul'ta.

The ancient orc word Bul'tar has both the most complex and subtle meanings. In universal terms, it refers to survival and life; however, in contextual terms, it sometimes symbolizes the most important thing or something of high value that the orc must fulfill in life.

It isn't easy to interpret this word in the continent's language, because it has a variety of meanings. In the case of the former, it is possible to replace the word with 'life' and 'survival'. However, the problem becomes more complicated in the latter meaning. This is because there is no word to describe it in the official language of the continent.

It is a word that collectively refers to life, morality, goals, dreams, and the most important things in life. Understand this word is the most critical and difficult task when studying the culture and philosophy of the orcs.

I have met countless orcs. As I moved among them, I could feel the true meaning of Bul'tar. Despite the gap between the two different languages, if there is a way to express it in our current language, then I would like to do so.

In the ancient orc language, Bul'tar is life. Life is 'honor' to the orcs.

For them, life is the process of realizing honor, and honor is the sum of the most important values of their lives. This orc belief is solemn and religious. Therefore, Bul'tar is life, and is separate from the will of survival.

-Elliot De Pontian (The Cultural Philosophy of Each Tribe's Ancient Language)



The orcs took the offensive against the death knights, Hoyt and Lenox dealing with one knight each. Only they could fight easily against the death knights. Lenox's axe split apart a death knight. Black smoke emerged from the death knight's body and healed the wound.

The fight started up again.

Ian regained his spirit. He thought that he had sliced the death knight, but his sword just bounced off.

They truly were death knights. If so, how strong was the master of the dungeon, the one who controlled them?

Lenox laughed in delight. It was a thunderous sound. At that moment, Lenox's body blazed with a white glow as his body moved at an unseen pace.

The death knight was also covered by a black energy, becoming a dark figure. The two exchanged invisible attacks with only the spectacular flashes of light and the metallic clang as the two weapons collided a few dozen times in a few minutes.

Ian's mouth dropped open. The darkness started to become diluted with light under Lenox's glorious axe. Every time his attack hit, a scream emerged from the mouth of the death knight.

Hoyt also slammed his hammer down and the head of the death knight that he was facing was smashed apart. Darkness flowed from the wound, but it couldn't endure against the torrent of attacks. Hoyt's hammer slammed against the death knight's body several times.

The remaining death knight collapsed under the attacks of all of the orc warriors and their attacks that were blessed by the shamans. Kinjur shouted as he waved his staff, Lightning striking the fallen death knight.

The death knight got up for a final hurrah., rushing towards the orcs in a broken state. It was a threatening attack. The battle continued again, but in the end, it was the orcs' victory.

The orcs took deep breaths. Another battle was imminent. Lenox had minor injuries

while Hoyt sprinkled potions in his wounds. Other orcs moaned from their injuries.

Gulda approached and placed a hand on Ian's shoulder. His breathing was rough. However, he laughed excitedly as he panted.

"Kuhahahal! Apprentice! Good fight!"

But he wasn't as wild as usual. Ian turned to him. Blood was flowing from a deep stab wound in Gulda's chest.

"Don't worry about it Apprentice."

"But..."

"This isn't enough to stop Gulda. Kuhahal."

Gulda's eyes turned towards the huge door.

"The dirty undead bastards won't be able to stop me."

Lenox organized the troops. Once again, a large number of orcs were unable to fight. For the first time, a few deaths occurred. The fight against the death knights was the most intense one. One of the death knights had even infiltrated the shamans and slaughtered them.

The orcs closed their eyes at the bodies of the dead orcs. There was a short moment of silence. Another fight was imminent. After the battle, they would hold proper funerals for the honorable warriors.

The wounded left, carrying their comrade's corpses on their backs. Now there were only a small number of orcs left.

Lenox looked around. The warriors and shamans, including Ian and Grom, nodded.

It was the final stage. Lenox pushed open the door.

The huge door slowly opened with a strange sound. The door opened and revealed the shadow of a person. A magician with his back to them.

He slowly turned around.

“.....!”

Under his hood was the bizarre appearance of a rotting face that seemed to be holding on by force. Bones and rotten flesh could be seen through his robe.

He discovered the orcs. Mocking laughter filled the air.

“Kuhuhuhu. In the end you came here, foolish orcs...”

“Lich, don’t interfere with the rest of the dead.” Lenox stepped forward and lifted his axe. “The person who goes against providence will be quickly taken care of.”

“You really don’t know anything...”

The lich walked out.

His appearance was fully revealed under the blazing torches.

“.....!”

“You orcs... You are naive...”

The lich wasn’t in a normal state. A blue glowing dagger was stabbed in his chest. The life vessel inside the heart was pierced and had a black glow around it.

“Anyway, I also... I... Just being used...”

“What does that mean?”

“They will come soon.”

The lich laughed again. It was at that moment.

*Step. Step. Step. Step.*

Footsteps were heard. It wasn’t the sound of one or two footsteps. It was the sound of many troops marching in unison. The orcs looked behind them. From the invisible end of the tunnel, fully armed human soldiers were moving towards them. It was an infantry unit wearing iron armor. They came through the front door.

“You were right,” a human male who led the unit said. He wore a helmet with blue eyes shining from within it. “It is easy to get the captain of the disgusting orcs here with a bait.”

The man burst out laughing. His laugh rang throughout the dungeon. The magician standing next to the man nodded.

“I told you, everything would go the way I planned.”

The magician looked at the orcs with pleased eyes and slowly took off the hood attached to the robe. He shook his sweaty hair off his face. A white star was revealed on his forehead. A magician user.

The magician asked, “How about it, isn’t it like I said?”

“It is accurate.”

“There is a link between those who have been cursed by the stars. Communicating with the hidden spy is the easiest thing to do.”

“Wonderful. I will remember this merit.”

“Thank you. Hahahaha!”

What were they talking about?

Ian’s eyes widened. It was a story that he didn’t want to believe, but Ian clearly saw it. Grom was slowly moving towards them.

The magician called out, “Hey, Hyunchul! Come here!”

“.....”

“Good work buddy. Now I will push you forward.”

Grom ran and stood beside the humans. He looked down and avoided the gaze of the orcs. The magician user struck his shoulder. “You were dependable as an orc. Are you still going to reset?”

“Yes.”

“I see. Good decision. I will raise you up in the clan.”

“Thank you.”

Ian couldn't believe the sight in front of him. Grom had betrayed them. No, from the very beginning, his mission had been to infiltrate the orcs.

“Earl, I did as I promised.”

“I will reward your group. Is the quest complete?”

“Catching those guys will resolve it. In particular, it would be a huge achievement if we catch him.”

The magician's finger pointed towards Lenox.

Quest. The instructor of the orc warriors at Orcrox Fortress. The great warrior Lenox. He was their goal. Defeat the orcs and kill Lenox. It was their quest, and Grom was the spy prepared for this quest. He became a warrior to gain Lenox's trust. The lich was just bait.

“Hey Lich. You can go.”

“Kuhuuuok...”

The magician user chanted a spell and the blue dagger fell out of the life vessel. The lich sat on the floor and recovered his breathing. The lich started to run. There was a small door near the lich. It opened the door and ran out.

Ian's eyes shook. There was an escape route. They could run over there.

Maybe he could buy some time.

Ian went to Lenox.

“Lenox! Over there...”

But Lenox was looking elsewhere. Ian's eyes followed Lenox's gaze. There were familiar faces among the humans.



Ahh. He had forgotten. The wounded orcs. They were already beaten and had been dragged here. They were collapsed like corpses, except they were breathing. Bleeding marks showed the path that they were pulled.

The earl kicked the face of the orc that was brought to the front. The orc's tusks flew through the air.

"Dirty orc scum."

"Kilkilkil."

"Scumbags."

His kicking continued.

"Die! Die!"

Ian turned back to Lenox. Lenox's eyes had sunk into his sockets. Ian was furious, but he opened his mouth to suggest that they flee.

"Apprentice," Lenox opened his mouth.

"Yes."

"Run that way."

"Huh...?"

"There might be troops waiting there, but I believe in you. Survive until the end and let Orcrox know what happened."

"Lenox..."

"We will remain."

Lenox raised his axe. The orc warriors simultaneously lifted their weapons.

It was ridiculous. The warriors were tired and wounded. The blood covering them didn't only belong to the enemy, and the difference in numbers was ridiculously huge. It was a battle between an egg and a rock. The orcs were about to collapse after the

sheer number of battles. And the enemy was an army that was completely armed and hadn't lost any troops.

"Lenox...!"

Ian gritted his teeth. They were different from Ian, they wouldn't rise again after dying. Their deaths were a complete end. But he could see that Lenox wouldn't listen to his words. As long as there were orc warriors among the humans, nobody would turn to flee.

"Then I will fight." Ian declared.

"....."

"I will fight with you..."

At that moment, Lenox pushed Ian. Ian rolled across the ground. He sat down and shook his head. Why...?

"Don't make me laugh, Apprentice. This isn't a fight that you can take part in," Lenox said.

Gulda nodded from where he was standing. "Yes. Are you stupid? Don't get in the way Apprentice! Kuhahahal!"

He removed his hand from his bleeding chest. That wasn't the end.

"It would be a waste to use my spells on you, Apprentice." It was Kinjur.

The other orc warriors started to open their mouths.

"It seems like you're mistaken because we fought together a little bit, but you will just be an obstacle in the main fight."

"In fact, we couldn't fight properly before because of you. Go right now. Flee. Kulkulkul."

"Don't look too unsightly as you run away."

"Stop bothering Lenox and do as he says. Kulkulkul."

“Run quickly and don’t get caught. I want to fight, so go right away!”

They were laughing.

Tears filled Ian’s eyes. They might be able to live if everyone would just run away. No matter how many died, maybe some would be able to live. But they would stay and fight until the end.

Ian shouted towards Hoyt, “Hoyt! What did you say? The most important thing is survival, life is the most important!”

Then he looked at Lenox.

“Lenox! You must live first! Isn’t our slogan Bul’tar?!”

He appealed to all the orcs. The orcs stared at Ian blankly. Then they looked at each other.

“Kuk...”

“Kukuk...”

The shoulders of one or two orcs started to shake.

“Puhahaha! Kuahahaha!”

“Kuhahahal!”

“Kulkulkulkul! Kulkulkulkul!”

They all burst out laughing. The laughter of the orcs echoed throughout the dungeon. They laughed for a long time. Then the laughter stopped.

Lenox stared at Ian with a smile on his face. Then he opened his mouth, “Apprentice.”

“.....”

“According to you, life is the most important thing.”

“Yes...”

“Then I’m going to ask.”

Lenox said, “Are you alive right now?”

Ian looked at him blankly.

“Huh...?”

“Are you living?”

“What...”

He couldn’t understand what Lenox was talking about.

“Are you alive right now?”

“I am alive.”

Lenox asked, “Why?”

“Huh...?”

“Why are you alive? Is it because you are breathing?”

“Ah...”

“Keep this in mind Apprentice.”

Lenox smiled. All the orc warriors smiled at Ian.

Lenox pointed his axe at Ian. In Ian’s eyes, Lenox’s laughing face overlapped with his axe.

Lenox shouted, “Keep this in mind! Apprentice!”

It was just like Lenox was at the training grounds. “Only this! You are breathing! But that doesn’t mean you are living!”

It felt like his final teachings.

“Just because you aren’t dead! That doesn’t mean you are living!”

Ian finally realized it. The orc’s greeting about whether a person was alive or not didn’t ask about one’s survival. Bul’tar wasn’t just a cry for life.

Lenox turned around. The orc warriors aimed their weapons at the humans with wide smiles on their faces. Lenox said, “You don’t understand this, making you not qualified to fight with us. So...”

At that moment, the warriors among the humans shouted and jumped up. It was a last hurrah. The ranks were disturbed.

“Get out now.”

Those were Lenox’s last words. The orc warriors rushed in unison. Ian couldn’t bear to look anymore. He jumped towards the emergency exit. The orcs shouted behind him.

“Bul’tar—————!”



*-Elder Lord’s Hercules Clan slaughtered a village and declared it their territory. What do you think about this?*

*–The method was brutal but in the end, it is difficult to place an ethical standard because they are NPCs. Even other clans...*

“Absolutely ridiculous.”

A man swallowed his whiskey. The bartender glanced at him as the man put down his glass.

“Stupid bastards who don’t even know what they are doing...”

“It seems like you’ve had too much to drink.”

“No, no. I am fine. You know me.”

The man nodded. He once again focused on the television screen. The topic had

changed.

*–How did Elder Saga Corporation implement such a perfect virtual reality?*

*–Let's see. It is due to the core system left behind by the genius scientist Yoo Jaehan. There is no public announcement due to confidentiality reasons, but there is probably a tremendous amount of computing devices...*

*–A genius that we can't even fathom.*

The man looked down at his pint of whiskey. The clear surface showed the man's haggard face.

He muttered, "Stupid bastards... What virtual reality...? What computing devices...?"

He swallowed his whiskey again.

"Don't make me laugh..."

He put down the cup and stared blankly into the air.

*–All we know is that the core system called Albino is what makes it possible...*

What? The man, Yoo Jaehan, laughed. What did he hear?

He stretched out his hand in the air. He was looking at something. He grabbed the air and muttered,

"A god... you idiots..."



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